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## The "Scholastic" Realism of Charles Sanders Peirce

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THE "SCHOLASTIC" REALISM OF  
CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE

by  
Ralph John Bastian, S.J.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

February  
1953

## LIFE

Ralph John Bastian, S.J., was born in Hammond, Indiana, August 8, 1927.

He was graduated from St. Ignatius High School, Chicago, Illinois, June, 1945. He entered the Society of Jesus at Milford, Ohio, in June, 1945, at which time he enrolled at Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio. After two years of Novitiate, he spent two years in the Juniorate studying Latin, Greek, and English Literature. In September, 1949, he transferred to West Baden College, affiliated with Loyola University, and received the degree of Bachelor of Arts, June, 1950. He is now enrolled in the graduate school of Loyola University, working for a degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy.

The author has published two articles, one on Plato entitled "The Mental Character of Meno," The Classical Bulletin, XXVII, February, 1951, 40-43; and "Side-Lights on Emotion in Vergil," The Classical Bulletin, XXVII, April, 1951, 61-63.

## PREFACE

Charles Sanders Peirce,<sup>1</sup> considered by many as the leading philosophical genius of America, is one of the most thought-provoking figures in American philosophy. Antedating James and Dewey (1839-1914), his name is eclipsed by their bright lights because of his failure to publish a complete work, or even a single book, setting forth his philosophical opinions. The crabbed manner of his style, his inability to carry grandiose projects through to completion, the fascination of new logical problems and ontological categories—these are among the factors which make Peirce's an endlessly stimulating, seminal mind, and yet one that disappoints and baffles at the very moment when it seems about to reveal itself. Unable to establish himself in a teaching position for more than a year or two, he spent the greater part of his life working for the United States Coast Survey, doing some of the most brilliant

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<sup>1</sup> The family name was spelled "Pers" when the original ancestor emigrated, and in many quarters it has continued to be pronounced that way.



scientific work of his day, for which he is still remembered.<sup>2</sup> His primary interest, though, lay in the fields of logic and philosophy. His father, Benjamin Peirce, the foremost American mathematician of his time and an inspiring teacher at Harvard, trained Charles so thoroughly that he could later say, "He educated me, and if I do anything it will be his work." Through the thorough training by his father, especially in mathematics, Charles was able to make significant progress in the field of logic, particularly in mathematical logic, where his work superseded that of Boole in the estimation of Schröder, who based much of his Vorlesungen Über die Algebra der Logik on Peirce's improvements of Boole's system.

Peirce's reading in philosophy, also begun under the direction of his father with whom he "devoted two hours a day to the study of Kant's Critic of Pure Reason for more than three years," until he "almost knew the whole book by heart,"<sup>3</sup> was supplemented by a study of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume,

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2 Paul Weiss, in the article on Charles Sanders Peirce in the Dictionary of American Biography, New York, 1943, XIV, 398-403, gives the best short account of Peirce's life. This summary is indebted to him for many of its facts.

3 Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, Harvard, 1931-1935, I.560. The volumes are entitled as follows: I, Principles of Philosophy; II, Elements of Logic; III, Exact Logic; IV, The Simplest Mathematics; V, Pragmatism and Pragmaticism; VI, Scientific Metaphysics. This work, which will be referred to as CP, is divided into numbered paragraphs. Hence all references will be by volume and paragraph, I.560 signifying Vol. I, Para. 560.

followed by the scholastics St. Augustine, Abelard, John of Salisbury, St. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and William Ockham. Reid, Hamilton, John Stuart Mill, Hegel, and Schelling also came under his purview, so it can be said that his acquaintance with the history of philosophy was sufficiently extensive to have enabled him to evaluate various positions and schools with a somewhat critical eye. One of the first fruits of his study and reading was a paper entitled "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," published in the Popular Science Monthly in 1878, which contained the first formulation, though not the name, of pragmatism. It was not until 1898 that William James popularized the name of pragmatism, but in so doing he modified it to such an extent that Peirce hastily rechristened his own doctrine pragmaticism, a term which, he wrote, was "ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers."<sup>4</sup>

One factor that prevented Peirce from exercising more influence was his lack of association with other intellectual leaders of the time. In his earlier days he had associated with Nicholas St. John Green, Chauncey Wright, Francis Ellingwood Abbot, and William James. But James is the only one of his younger contemporaries with whom Peirce ever became intimate,<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> CP, 5.414.

<sup>5</sup> The personal relations between the two men, as well as the philosophical influence of Peirce on James, has been ably handled by Ralph Barton Perry in The Thought and Character of

and even here Peirce had the frustration of seeing James, despite his love for truth, holding the exact opposite of himself on many fundamental issues. Peirce saw his own foibles of character in contrast to James: "Who, for example, could be of a nature so different from his as I? He so concrete, so living; I a mere table of contents, so abstract, a very snarl of twine."<sup>6</sup>

He retired rather early in life to "the wildest county in the Northern States," and built himself a large farmhouse near Milford, Pennsylvania. Here, except for occasional lectures, he spent the rest of his life, devoting himself to his writing on logic and philosophy. He tried to make a little money by writing all the definitions on logic, metaphysics, mathematics, mechanics, astronomy, astrology, weights, measures, and universities for several large dictionaries, along with book reviews on a wide range of topics for the Nation. All in all, he turned out about 2,000 words a day, with care and in a clear hand. But he failed to get a publisher for the several books he planned, and in his dire poverty it was William James who came to his aid in his declining years. By 1909 Peirce was a very ill man of seventy, compelled to take a grain of morphine daily to stave off pain. Through his last five years, although his original

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William James, Boston, 1935, esp. I, chap. xxxii; II, lxxv, lxxvi.

<sup>6</sup> CP, 6.184. See 6.182-184 for a beautiful portrayal of Peirce's esteem for James.

work was over, he continued with undiminished persistency to rework many of his former essays—forming the letters with great difficulty to judge from the tremulous, painstaking script. In 1914 he died of cancer, a frustrated, isolated man, still working on his logic, without a publisher, with scarcely a disciple, unknown to the public at large.

Yet this is the man of whose lectures James wrote: They are as "flashes of brilliant light relieved against Cimmerian blackness."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, as more become acquainted with his ideas through the Collected Papers, they subscribe to the words of Morris Cohen: "If philosophic eminence were measured not by the number of finished treatises of dignified length, but by the extent to which a man brought forth new and fruitful ideas of radical importance, C.S. Peirce would easily be the greatest figure in American philosophy."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Pragmatism: a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking, New York, 1907, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by Thomas A. Goudge, The Thought of C. S. Peirce, Toronto, 1950, facing p. 1.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Little exaggeration is needed to say that no problem has caused more furor in the philosophical world than that first raised by Boethius' Latin version of Porphyry's Introduction to the Categories of Aristotle in the fifth century:

I shall refuse to say concerning genera and species whether they subsist or whether they are placed in the naked understandings alone or whether subsisting they are corporeal or incorporeal, and whether they are separated from sensibles or placed in sensibles and in accord with them. Questions of this sort are most exalted business and require very great diligence of inquiry.<sup>1</sup>

The implications arising from the various solutions to this pregnant question have colored the history of philosophy through the ages, and it is largely on a philosopher's interpretation of this problem of universals, or on his stand in the controversy between nominalism and realism, that his philosophy will be based. If he holds that genera and species really exist, he is a realist; if he holds, on the other hand, that they are mere names by which similar individuals are designated, he is a nomi-

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<sup>1</sup> Richard McKeon, ed. and trans., Selections from Medieval Philosophers, New York, [1929], I, 91.

nalist. Another way of contrasting the two doctrines is this: Realism is the doctrine that genera and species are not mere conceptions of the mind, but real things actually existing outside the mind; nominalism is the opposing doctrine that individual, particular objects alone are real.<sup>2</sup> The history of philosophy has been the history of the ascendancy of one or other of these ideas.

Before any further progress is made, a careful distinction must be noted, for there are realisms and realisms. Realism is a term bridging two widely-varying fields, and it is well to be aware of this difference. Realism is first taken as a doctrine opposed to idealism, namely, as stating that there are things which exist outside the mind. Secondly, realism is a doctrine opposed to nominalism, and it holds that the things really existing outside the mind are not mere singulars, but have some sort of community. It is plain that the second type of realism is dependent upon the first, for if there were no real things given, then obviously there would be no generality or community among them. This thesis is primarily concerned with realism in the second sense as opposed to nominalism, and the other type will be touched on only as necessary to prove

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2 Étienne Gilson, The Unity of Philosophical Experience, New York, 1947, 12. See also Frederick Copleston, S.J., A History of Philosophy, Westminster, Maryland, 1950, II, 140-142.



that Peirce was working with real things.

In the ancient Greek world philosophy was predominantly realistic, and this doctrine continued to hold sway throughout the Middle Ages. Since then, however, and especially since the Renaissance, European philosophy on the whole has been nominalistic. St. Thomas Aquinas had definitively and conclusively settled the controversy in favor of realism. In the fourteenth century, however, there was a great outburst of nominalism under the leadership of William Ockham. Ockham's doctrine arose from an opposition to Scotus, for he stated that the individual contained nothing which was similar or common with any other individual. The universal did not exist in any way in the real world.<sup>3</sup> Nominalism, however, despite the fact that it was allied in the controversy between Church and State with the party opposing the excessive powers of the pope and extolling civil government, a connection which lent the philosophical doctrine a factitious following, never was able to take over the field in the fourteenth century. One of the main obstacles to the early spread of nominalism was the keen Scotistic thinkers, all realists, who were in the predominant positions of authority in the universities. A century later, however, when Scotism had

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<sup>3</sup> Maurice de Wulf, Histoire de la Philosophie Médiévale, 6th ed., Louvain, 1947, 31-32. Quoting Ockham he says: "Nullum universale est extra animam existens realiter in substantiis individuis nec est de substantia vel esse earum."

died out with the death of the leading Scotists, the humanists took over their chairs in the universities.

Peirce has shown how the victory of the humanists brought with it the nominalistic philosophy:

The humanists were weak thinkers. Some of them no doubt might have been trained to be strong thinkers; but they had no severe training in thought. All their energies went to writing a classical language and an artistic style of expression. They went to the ancients for their philosophy; and mostly took up the three easiest of the ancient sects of philosophy, Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Scepticism.<sup>4</sup>

As these three philosophies were all basically nominalistic, there was "a tidal wave of nominalism. Descartes was a nominalist. Locke and all his following, Berkeley, Hartley, Hume, and even Reid were nominalists. Leibniz was an extreme nominalist."<sup>5</sup> Therefore the history of the last four centuries is the story of the complete victory of nominalism. Beginning as an attack on the Church, it was taken over by technical philosophy, and from philosophy it spread until it had deployed itself on all the frontiers of man's daily existence. Science, of course, was the field in which nominalism found its most enthusiastic reception. With the penchant for experimentation which arose with Francis Bacon, Kepler, Galileo, and Copernicus culminating in the nominalistic cosmology of Newton, modern sci-

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4 CP, 1.18.

5 CP, 1.19.

ence became—or thought it had become—irrevocably associated with nominalism.<sup>6</sup> That this is not true will be shown when the position of Francis Ellingwood Abbot is discussed.

Nominalism, then, was sweeping the field and carrying all before it in philosophy and science. The new thinkers were incapable of the subtle thought that would have been necessary for any adequate discussion of the question of universals. They accepted nominalistic views on the most superficial grounds. The age-old question of Boethius soon became buried and put out of sight by new questions that overlaid it, like new papers on an encumbered study desk. People no longer asked: What is the real? Is it the singular or universal? The individual or the species? This whole problem gave way to the critical question which the medieval would never have bothered asking because he took it for granted: How is knowledge possible at all?<sup>7</sup>

This was the state of affairs at the time of Kant, who was the logical outgrowth of nominalism. How this development took place can be pointed out briefly. The essence of nominalism is the doctrine that universals correspond to nothing really existent outside the mind, but are either mere empty

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<sup>6</sup> See James Feibleman, The Revival of Realism, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1946, 13-16.

<sup>7</sup> This point was made by C.R.S. Harris in Duns Scotus, Vol. II: The Philosophical Doctrines of Duns Scotus, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1927, 16.

names or names denoting subjective concepts.<sup>8</sup> Nominalism thus distinctly anticipated the Kantian critical philosophy in referring the source of all general conceptions (and thereby of all human knowledge), not to the object alone, or to the object and subject together, but to the subject alone; it distinctly anticipated the doctrine that "things conform to cognition, not cognition to things."<sup>9</sup> Since universals are classifications of things based on their supposed resemblances and differences, the denial of all objective reality to universals is the denial of all objective reality to the supposed resemblances and differences of things themselves; the denial of all knowledge of the relations of objects is the denial of all knowledge of the objects related; and this denial is tantamount to the assertion that things-in-themselves are utterly unknown. Thus Ockham was merely a nominalistic predecessor of Kant, who, in his turn, pushed the lack of correspondence between the logic of concepts and the facts of the external world to a constitutional inability to bridge the gap.<sup>10</sup> Kant since has swung all subsequent speculation into nominalistic channels; and all of modern philo-

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<sup>8</sup> Albert Stöckl, Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, Mainz, 1865, II, 962.

<sup>9</sup> Thus argues Francis Ellingwood Abbot in Scientific Theism, 2nd ed., Boston, 1886, 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Auguste Brunner, S.J., La Connaissance Humaine, Paris, [1943], 268.

sophy, insofar as it is based on Kantianism, may be said to rest, by tacit agreement, upon the nominalistic theory of universals.

Kant therefore not only espoused nominalism, but even went further and set up an idealistic philosophy. Although a reaction was felt against Kant and his immediate successors almost at once, it took some time for philosophers to work out the ideas in logical form. To repair the damage done by Kant, idealism had first of all to be refuted and the existence of real things outside the mind again established. Thomas Reid was the leader of this movement, and although not of the philosophic stature of the Sage of Königsberg, he produced an effect on philosophy which has eventually been of extreme importance. Reid restored the reality of the mind, against Hume, and of that which the mind knows, the external world, including both substance and all possibilities, against Kant. Thus, although Reid did not go all the way and evolve a theory of universals, he did open the way toward realism again by vindicating the existence of real objects, and thereby made a theory of universals possible again. His influence during the nineteenth century was not great, although it was then that he left his impress on the most important of American realists, Charles Sanders Peirce.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> James Feibleman, An Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy, New York, [1946], 455.

As is evident, more will be seen of Peirce's contribution to the cause of realism in the following pages.

Fundamentally, though, the reaction to nominalism has a much more radical cause than the opposition of a school of realist philosophers. The reason why realism is assuming a widening sphere of importance is that contemporary scientists and philosophers are discovering that the presupposition for which they had thought nominalism was a necessary condition is false. What is this presupposition? It is that empirical science is essentially nominalistic and requires a metaphysics and epistemology based on nominalism for its foundation stones. Scientists themselves have shown, however, that empirical science is not based on nominalism;<sup>12</sup> indeed, despite what scientists may profess as their philosophy, they are essentially realists when they turn to their sciences. This is the burden and theme of the Introduction to Abbot's Scientific Theism, a book for which Peirce can never find sufficient praise. Abbot first argues that modern philosophy has been overshadowed by the blight of nominalism.<sup>13</sup> Following this there is an account of the history of the various types of realism, ranging

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<sup>12</sup> William Stanley Jevons, The Principles of Science: a Treatise on Logic and Scientific Method, 2nd ed., London, 1883, 8-9. Also John Tyndall, Light and Electricity, New York, c.1872, 60-61.

<sup>13</sup> Abbot, Scientific Theism, 1-14.

from Plato's extreme realism to Abbot's own theory of relationism which he wishes to establish.<sup>14</sup> Next Abbot proves that, while philosophy became nominalistic after the downfall of scholasticism, science has been and is essentially opposed to that doctrine.<sup>15</sup> Abbot's position is neatly summarized in the following passage:

Science is to-day challenging emphatically the very foundation of both a priori and a posteriori philosophies; and the challenge is none the less menacing or deep-toned, because it has been hitherto uttered in deed rather than in word. She denies, not by a theory as yet, but by the erection of a vast and towering edifice of verified objective knowledge, that genera and species are devoid of objective reality, or that general terms are destitute of objective correlates; she denies that Nominalism has rightly solved the problem of universals, when that solution would in an instant, if conceded, sweep away all that she has won from Nature by the sweat of her brow. Her very existence is the abundant vindication of Relationism, as the stable and solid foundation of real knowledge of an objective universe.<sup>16</sup>

Abbot in his book expounds the necessity of philosophy "catching up" with science. He wants the queen of the sciences to formu-

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 15-29. His theory will be presented in some detail in Chapter Three. Very briefly, however, relationism, or relational realism, is a theory which teaches that universals are, first, objective relations of resemblance among objectively existing things; secondly, subjective concepts of these relations determined in the mind by the relations themselves; and, thirdly, names representative both of the relations and the concepts, and applicable alike to both.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 29-55.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 36.

late explicitly the realistic suppositions on which modern empirical science is based:

Science has achieved all its marvellous triumphs by practically denying the fundamental principle laid down by Kant, and by practically proceeding upon its exact opposite; and it is a scandal to philosophy that she has not yet legitimated this practical procedure, overwhelmingly justified as it is by its incontrovertible results. The time has come for philosophy to reverse the Roscellino-Kantian revolution, and give to science a theory of knowledge which shall render the scientific method, not practically successful (for that it already is), but theoretically impregnable.<sup>17</sup>

It is plain that Abbot was one of the early heralds of the modern return to realism.

But what does all this have to do with Peirce? What bearing does the medieval controversy over realism and nominalism have on his philosophy? These are questions upon which this thesis will attempt to throw some light.

As for the problem of universals, at least one important philosopher is disinclined to view it as exclusive property of the Middle Ages, but rather states: "I think Peirce was right in regarding the realist-nominalist controversy as one which is still undecided, and which is as important now as at any former time."<sup>18</sup> Peirce himself "declared for realism," and although he had "since very carefully and thoroughly

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>18</sup> Bertrand Russell in Foreword of An Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy by James Feibleman, xv.



revised" his philosophical opinions "more than half a dozen times, and had modified them more or less on most topics"; still he had "never been able to think differently on that question of nominalism and realism."<sup>19</sup> As a remedy against the nominalism of modern philosophy he suggested a return to scholastic realism, particularly that of Duns Scotus. Thus he writes in 1897:

The works of Duns Scotus have strongly influenced me. If his logic and metaphysics, not slavishly worshipped, but torn away from its medievalism, be adapted to modern culture, under continual wholesome reminders of nominalistic criticisms, I am convinced that it will go far toward supplying the philosophy which is best to harmonize with physical science.<sup>20</sup>

Peirce too had his form of the problem of universals. He "sees no objection to defining it as the question of which is the best, the laws or the facts under these laws."<sup>21</sup> This question "is as pressing today as ever it was."<sup>22</sup> That Peirce respected Abbot's criticism of nominalism may be gathered from these statements:

Dr. Francis Ellingwood Abbot in the very remarkable introduction to his book entitled "Scientific Theism" [1885] showed on the contrary, quite conclusively, that science has always been at heart realistic, and always must be so; and upon comparing his writings

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19 CP, 1.20.

20 CP, 1.6.

21 CP, 4.1.

22 Ibid.

with mine, it is easily seen that these features of nominalism which I pointed out in science are merely superficial and transient.<sup>23</sup>

Again Peirce says:

Dr. [F.E.] Abbot in his Scientific Theism [1885] has so clearly and with such admirable simplicity shown that modern science is realistic that it is perhaps injudicious for me to attempt to add anything upon the subject. Yet I shall try to put it into such a light that it may reflect some rays upon the worth or worthlessness of detached ideas.<sup>24</sup>

It is quite evident that Peirce believed himself to be a realist, and indeed, to have gone back to Scotus for the basis of his realistic theory. In this thesis the realism of Peirce will be further investigated to find out whether he is really a scholastic realist, as he so often claimed, or whether he follows the relationism of Abbot. But before this problem can be solved, another question must first be taken up: that of the realism of Peirce, its relation to his sources, and his use of his sources.

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23 CP, 1.20.

24 CP, 4.1.

## CHAPTER II

### PEIRCE'S PROTESTATIONS OF REALISM

If a philosopher is to have a realistic philosophy based on universals, then quite obviously he must reject nominalism somewhere along the line. Therefore, before entering into a discussion of the realism which Peirce found to be consequent upon the acceptance of the three categories, which is a kind of Aristotelianism, "of the scholastic wing, approaching Scotism, but going much further in the direction of scholastic realism,"<sup>1</sup> it will be well to consider briefly Peirce's arguments against nominalism.

Nominalism, which is for Peirce the belief that "laws and general types are figments of the mind,"<sup>2</sup> holds that particular facts or events are the only realities. Since these events must be understood, it is useful to record them by means of abstract expressions. Some of the latter, such as the laws of motion, summarize the way in which certain events have followed one another. Other statements, such as "hardness" or

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1 CP, 5.77n.

2 CP, 1.16.

"intelligence," summarize what has been found to obtain in numerous individual instances. All these abstractions are merely convenient devices which have no other purpose apart from the role they play in knowing. They designate nothing in the natural world. Peirce, it is evident, includes under the one category of nominalism both the extreme nominalists who argue that abstract terms are nothing but words, and the conceptualists who admit that abstract terms are meaningful words which designate, however, purely mental concepts. Conceptualism is but another form of nominalism, and the only reason that conceptualists have tried to maintain that their position is independent of nominalism is their "loose and slapdash style of thinking that has made it possible for them to remain nominalists."<sup>3</sup> In reality conceptualism is nothing but a muddle-headed form of nominalism.

From the vantage point of his realism Peirce kept nominalism under continuous fire for many years. His attitude toward it verged close to contempt. "Modern nominalists are mostly superficial men,"<sup>4</sup> any one of whom reminds Peirce of the blind spot on the retina, "so wonderfully does he unconsciously smooth over his field of vision and omit facts that stare him in the face, while seeing all round them without per-

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3 CP, 1.27.

4 CP, 5.312.

ceiving any "gap in his view of the world."<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere he says that "nominalists cannot reason about infinity, because they do not reason logically about anything."<sup>6</sup> Such is his antipathy to the doctrine that he even disapproves of Scotus because of an inclination to nominalism, despite his otherwise high esteem of the Subtle Doctor.<sup>7</sup>

Feibleman has divided Peirce's arguments against nominalism into four classifications, according as they are taken a) from logic, b) from metaphysics, c) from psychology, and d) from science. As he himself concedes, however, "these are very rough divisions, for the arguments shade off almost imperceptibly into one another."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, rather than give arguments from each of these fonts, a typical few will be selected to show what Peirce's mind on the question was, for, as Feibleman points out in another work, Peirce "saw the contradiction which makes nominalism untenable, that since nominalism allows no universal principles it cannot allow itself, since it too is a universal principle."<sup>9</sup>

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5 CP, 4.1.

6 CP, 1.165.

7 CP, 1.560.

8 Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy, 173.

9 The Revival of Realism, 34.

The first argument shows that nominalism makes impossible not only identity but also similarity:

Now, upon the nominalistic theory, there is not only no absolute or numerical identity, but there are not even any real agreements of likenesses between individuals; for likeness consists merely in the calling of several individuals by one name, or (in some systems) in their exciting one idea.<sup>10</sup>

This nominalistic hypothesis which denies real agreement or likeness shuts off all reasoning and communication; if true, it would make all human discourse, which is based on identity and difference, impossible and would prohibit all planning. That it is not true is affirmed by the existence of successful reasoning, communication, discourse, and planning.

Another argument can be taken from the reality of abstractions, for "the citadel of nominalism" will fall easy victim to those who "have once mounted the vantage-point of the logic of relatives,"<sup>11</sup> which "shows that the introduction of abstractions—which the nominalists have taken such delight in ridiculing—is of the greatest service in necessary inference."<sup>12</sup> The argument is long, but contains an illustration used often by Peirce and his commentators:

It is very easy to laugh at the old physician who is

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10 CP, 6.593.

11 CP, 4.1.

12 CP, 4.611.

represented as answering the question, why opium puts people to sleep, by saying that it is because it has a dormative virtue. It is an answer that no doubt carries vagueness to its last extreme. Yet, invented as the story was to show how little meaning there might be in an abstraction, nevertheless the physician's answer does contain a truth that modern philosophy has generally denied: it does assert that there really is in opium something which explains its always putting people to sleep. This has, I say, been denied by modern philosophers generally. Not, of course, explicitly; but when they say that the different events of people going to sleep after taking opium have really nothing in common, but only that the mind classes them together—and this is what they virtually do say in denying the reality of generals—they do implicitly deny that there is any true explanation of opium's generally putting people to sleep.<sup>13</sup>

This passage shows that nominalism is false in denying that there is any sameness lying underneath similar things or events in the world.

Nominalism can be refuted from psychological grounds in this manner: Nominalism holds that everything is known as an individual, and that there is no reason for two things giving the same idea to the mind (since they do not fundamentally contain the foundation for a common idea). Peirce, however, while admitting that everything that we know is mental, nevertheless maintains that what is known by the mind originates not in the mind but in the objective world. Thus the relations, or universals, of which we have knowledge, exist independently, as is evidenced by their stubbornness and intractability, that

is, by the fact that every mind necessarily draws the same ideas from like things. In his own words:

All human thought and opinion contains an arbitrary, accidental element, dependent on the limitations in circumstances, power, and bent of the individual; an element of error, in short. But human opinion universally tends in the long run to a definite form, which is the truth. Let any human being have enough information and exert enough thought upon any question, and the result will be that he will arrive at a certain definite conclusion, which is the same that any other mind will reach under sufficiently favorable circumstances.<sup>14</sup>

Nominalism cannot admit an element in things which would force all minds to derive similar ideas from them.

This summary of Peirce's arguments can be concluded by some taken from the evidence of science. Although Peirce was a realist by at least 1871,<sup>15</sup> he does not seem to have comprehended the realism of science until after reading the introduction to Abbot's Scientific Theism, which did not appear until 1885.<sup>16</sup> At any rate, after that time he used this ammunition also in his assaults upon nominalism. "Physical science,"

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<sup>14</sup> Charles Sanders Peirce, "Review of Alexander Campbell Fraser's Edition of the Works of George Berkeley," The North American Review, CXIII (1871), 449.

<sup>15</sup> His review of Fraser's Berkeley gives sufficient proof of this. Before treating of Berkeley himself, Peirce spends ten pages reviewing the vicissitudes of realism through the later Middle Ages and following periods.

<sup>16</sup> CP, 1.20. "Upon comparing his [Abbot's] writing with mine, it is easily seen that these features of nominalism which I pointed out in science are merely superficial and transient."



Peirce states in 1902, "gives its assent . . . to scholastic realism."<sup>17</sup> A few years later: "After physical science has discovered so many general principles in Nature, nominalism becomes a disgraceful habitude of thought."<sup>18</sup> Again:

No mistake can be greater than to suppose that Ockhamistic thought is naturally allied to the conceptions of modern science: it is anti-scientific in essence. A scientific man whose only metaphysics has been such as his own studies have suggested will be definitely adverse to the ideas of Ockham, and, so far as his simple conceptions go, will agree with Scotus.<sup>19</sup>

Nominalism is lastly inconsistent with science because it deliberately blocks off the road of inquiry, which it is precisely the function and aim of science to keep open. "It is one of the peculiarities of nominalism that it is continually supposing things to be absolutely inexplicable."<sup>20</sup> According to the nominalists, "we come up, bump against actions absolutely unintelligible and inexplicable, where human inquiries have to stop."<sup>21</sup>

Now that it has been shown how Peirce explicitly rejected nominalism, an explanation of his own system of realism is in order. The task will not be easy, for as one author

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17 CP, 6.361.

18 CP, 6.175.

19 CP, 2.166.

20 CP, 1.170.

21 Ibid.

points out: "In spite of this voluminousness it is amazing that a clear or concise statement of his realism is not to be found in his writings."<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, if the problem is attacked in the way that Peirce saw it, it may at least set the question in a clearer light if it does not render the actual task of delineating his realism somewhat easier. The method, then, that Peirce used to get at reality, namely, his phenomenology and categories, must be explained.

Metaphysics, or the science that governs a realistic philosophy, must, according to Peirce, rest on observation:

Metaphysics, even bad metaphysics, really rests on observations, whether consciously or not; and the only reason that this is not universally recognized is that it rests upon kinds of phenomena with which every man's experience is so saturated that he usually pays no particular attention to them. The data of metaphysics are not less open to observation, but immeasurably more so, than the data, say, of the very highly developed science of astronomy.<sup>23</sup>

If the dependence of metaphysics on observation were better known, the system itself would be more patent to the observer. Hence phenomenology (or phaneroscopy as Peirce variously names it) must be the first step towards a realism, as it is by phenomenology that one's observation is sharpened. The purpose of "Phenomenology, or the Doctrine of Categories . . . is to

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<sup>22</sup> Justus Buchler, Charles Peirce's Empiricism, London, 1939, 123.

<sup>23</sup> CP, 6.2.

unravel the tangled skein [of] all that in any sense appears and wind it into distinct forms; or in other words, to make the ultimate analysis of all experiences the first task to which philosophy has to apply itself."<sup>24</sup> Phenomenology is that "preliminary inquiry" which is aimed precisely at aiding a person to become conscious of what he observes; it is a "science that does not draw any distinction of good and bad in any sense whatever, but just contemplates phenomena as they are; simply opens its eyes and describes what it sees; not what it sees in the real as distinguished from figment—not regarding any such dichotomy—but simply describing the object, as a phenomena, and stating what it finds in all phenomena alike."<sup>25</sup> The subject matter of phaneroscopy is the phaneron, or phenomenon, which is "the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not."<sup>26</sup> As students of phenomenology, then, all we have to do

is simply open our mental eyes and look well at the phenomenon and say what are the characteristics that are never wanting in it, whether that phenomenon be something that outward experience forces upon our attention, or whether it be the wildest of dreams, or whether it be the most abstract and general of

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24 CP, 1.280.

25 CP, 5.37.

26 CP, 1.284.

the conclusions of science.<sup>27</sup>

The phaneron, or object of phenomenology, is not something subjective, such as would be expressed by the English word idea. For idea has a psychological connotation which Peirce wished to avoid. That the phaneron is not an idea is clear from this fact: In the very breath of saying "there is no such idea" as this or that, the phaneron in question is definitely described. Peirce in 1898 reprimanded Husserl for having hopelessly tied up the foundations of his phenomenology in psychological complications, although both men agree that phenomenology is an attempt to focus attention on the universal or essential elements of the phenomena.<sup>28</sup>

Phenomenology, then, is not a subjective science, nor is its primary concern with the real. But if these two possibilities are precluded, just where does one's interest lie in studying the science? The phenomenologist is seeking to generalize the direct observations he has made, to signalize several

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27 CP, 5.41.

28 Frank Thilly, A History of Philosophy, revised by Ledger Wood, New York, [1951], 599-600. See CP, 4.7, where Peirce says that Husserl is one of those writers of our generation who, "after underscored protestations that their discourse shall be of logic exclusively and not by any means of psychology (almost all logicians protest that on file), forthwith become intent upon those elements of the process of thinking which seem to be special to a mind like that of the human race, as we find it, to too great neglect of those elements which must belong as much to any one as to any other mode of embodying the same thought."

very broad classes of phenomena, describing the features of each with the result that, although they will be seen as inextricably mixed together, yet their characters will appear manifestly quite disparate, as they fall under a short list of broad categories.<sup>29</sup> He is trying to sort out the phanerons into their indecomposable elements, which can be done in two ways: either according to the form or structure of the elements, or according to their matter. After two years of labor on the latter Peirce ascertained that a division according to the matter was beyond his powers, wherefore he divided the phenomena into categories according to their structure.<sup>30</sup> Even this is not an easy task, however, for three faculties in particular are required in order that one may observe correctly what is presented to him. The first of these is "the faculty of seeing what stares one in the face"; secondly, the faculty of "resolute discrimination which fastens itself like a bulldog upon the particular feature that we are studying, follows it wherever it may lurk, and detects it beneath all its disguises"; finally, the faculty which confers "the generalizing power of the mathematician who produces the abstract formula that comprehends the very essence of the feature under examination purified from all admixture of extra-

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29 CP, 1.286.

30 CP, 1.288.

neous and irrelevant accompaniments."<sup>31</sup>

When William James complained of the novelty of the three categories, Peirce admitted that perhaps he did not have the clearest notions possible of them:

It rather annoys me to be told that there is anything novel in my three categories; for if they have not, however confusedly, been recognized by men since men began to think, that condemns them at once. To make them as distinct as it is in their nature to be is, however, no small task. I do not suppose they are so in my own mind; and evidently, it is not in their nature to be as sharp as ordinary concepts.<sup>32</sup>

However, "the three categories are supposed to be the three kinds of elements that attentive perception can make out in the phenomenon."<sup>33</sup> These three indecomposable elements are called by Peirce quality, fact (or reaction), and law (or representation). They are also known in his writings as monad, dyad, and triad.<sup>34</sup> But most commonly he refers to them as Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, for these terms carry with them no other connotations.<sup>35</sup> These categories, which form the basis of his philosophy, must now be explained sepa-

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31 CP, 5.42.

32 Letter of June 8, 1903, to William James, quoted by Perry in The Thought and Character of William James, II, 428-429.

33 Ibid., 429.

34 CP, 1.293.

35 CP, 4.3; 5.121.

rately.

Firstness is the first of Peirce's three fundamental ontological categories. "Category the First is the Idea of that which is such as it is regardless of anything else. That is to say, it is a Quality of Feeling."<sup>36</sup> It is predominant in the ideas of freshness, life, freedom. The free is that which has nothing behind it to determine its actions. (And insofar as the idea of negation of another enters, the idea of another enters, and thus the Firstness is spoiled by an admixture of Secondness.)<sup>37</sup> Firstness, in fact, "is so tender that you cannot touch it without spoiling it,"<sup>38</sup> and the minute you begin to think about it it loses its element of pure Firstness. What does Peirce mean by Firstness? "The color of magenta, the odor of attar, the sound of a railway whistle, the taste of quinine, the quality of the emotion upon contemplating a fine mathematical demonstration, the quality of feeling of love"<sup>39</sup> are all examples of Firstness. Again Peirce says:

Imagine me to wake and in a slumberous condition to have a vague, unobjectified, still less unsubjectified, sense of redness, or of salt taste, or of an ache, or of grief or joy, or of a prolonged musical note. That

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36 CP, 5.66.

37 CP, 1.302.

38 CP, 1.358.

39 CP, 1.304.

would be, as nearly as possible, a purely monadic state of feeling.<sup>40</sup>

Firstness, then, is a quality; but this notion of quality yet remains to be investigated. Quality must not be thought of in its psychological status, but must be transferred to a metaphysical conception, which perceives quality as a pure nature, in itself without parts or features, and without embodiment.<sup>41</sup> Quality is not dependent, in its being, upon mind, nor upon the fact that some material thing possesses it. Quality must not be confused with the sense experience which makes qualities known to us. It is the nominalists who always maintained that quality does not exist without sense. The realists, among them Peirce, have always denied this, and fought for the opposite. "That quality is dependent upon sense is the great error of the conceptualists. That it is dependent upon the subject in which it is realized is the great error of all the nominalistic schools."<sup>42</sup> "That the quality of red depends on anybody actually seeing it, so that red things are no longer red in the dark, is a denial of common sense."<sup>43</sup> "A realist," it is true, "fully admits that a sense-quality

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<sup>40</sup> CP, 1.303.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> CP, 1.422.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.



is only a possibility of sensation"; but still "he thinks a possibility remains possible when it is not actual."<sup>44</sup> Quality, then, may be defined as a "mere abstract potentiality; and the error of those [nominalistic] schools lies in holding that the potential, or possible, is nothing but what the actual makes it to be."<sup>45</sup> Thus quality is an external thing, independent of the mind,<sup>46</sup> a possibility which sense experience may or may not actualize, but which in any case is independent of such actualization.<sup>47</sup>

Lastly the relation of Firstness to generality should be noted. Perhaps it would seem that a quality could only be particular, since it is a kind of consciousness which involves no analysis, comparison, or any process whatsoever, nor consists in a process by which one stretch of consciousness is distin-

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. Peirce's use of "possibility" or "abstract potentiality" here closely approaches the scholastic notion of potency. He points out that the error of the nominalists lies in maintaining that the whole alone is something, and its components, however essential to it, are nothing. Thus the quality of red can be the power the red thing has of causing a sensation of red, even though the object may be here and now in the dark. For the red quality to become actualized, sensation is needed; but no sensation or sense faculty is requisite for the possibility which is the being of the quality.

<sup>46</sup> CP, 6.327.

<sup>47</sup> CP, 1.25, 426.

guished from another.<sup>48</sup> Yet qualities can represent the general, as is instanced here:

Imagine at once a toothache, a splitting headache, a jammed finger, a corn on the foot, a burn, and a colic, not necessarily as existing at once—leave that vague—and attend not to the parts of the imagination but to the resultant impression. That will give an idea of a general quality of pain.<sup>49</sup>

The idea of quality is thus the idea of a phenomenon considered as a monad, without reference to its parts or components or to anything else, and as such it can stand for a general. When Peirce calls quality a monad, he is not trying to say that every quality is simple in the sense of containing only one note. This would contradict the notion just described whereby quality can represent the general. Rather, the idea of quality considered as a monad would correspond somewhat to an undifferentiated simple apprehension in which many notes are contained in the one idea,<sup>50</sup> inasmuch as the idea is taken in its totality and not considered as composed of diverse elements. Thus quality, although fundamentally simple, can be seen as general when reflected upon, for what the quality can represent is general, and "every quality is, in itself, general."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> CP, 1.306.

<sup>49</sup> CP, 1.424.

<sup>50</sup> See Peter Hoenen, S.J., La Théorie de Jugement d'après St. Thomas d'Aquin, Rome, 1946, 16.

<sup>51</sup> CP, 1.447.

This last statement may lead one to wonder how Peirce distinguished between the generality of Thirdness, which primarily contains the notion of law, and the generality of Firstness exhibited in the idea of quality. The difference may be explained in this manner: Enough has been said of Firstness to show that it is that which the mind arrives at first. This first moment of sensation—or at least this seems to be Peirce's interpretation—the first moment of sensation is general in the sense of being undetermined, or capable of further determination. Thus what is first apprehended is not an individual, but a general essence. As Peirce states: "Given any possible determination, there is a possible further determination."<sup>52</sup> Thus the category of Thirdness would still contain the generality required for universality, while the generality of the category of Firstness would be only that of a notion that does not enjoy the perfectly individual nature of facts, which belong to the category of Secondness, as will be seen immediately.

Secondness now merits consideration. "Category the Second is the Idea of that which is such as it is as being Second to some First, regardless of anything else. . . . That is to say, it is Reaction as an element of the Phenomenon."<sup>53</sup> It is predominant in the ideas of causation and of statical

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> CP, 5.66.

force. For cause and effect are two; and statical forces always occur in pairs. Secondness is also predominant in the idea of reality, for the real is that which insists upon forcing its way to recognition as something other than the mind's creation.<sup>53a</sup>

Secondness is the next simplest element that comes before the mind, the fact of struggle. Standing on the outside of a door that is slightly ajar, you put your hand on the knob to open it. You experience an unseen, silent resistance. This is the second. Secondness is found even in the feeling of a single quality. For to concentrate steadily on one single feeling that never changes supposes a knack of mental manipulation which excludes all other incoming data. But this resistance could not be had without struggle or forceful action. Thus Secondness is found in all our reactions, yet does not involve Thirdness, for struggle is simply a mutual action between two things regardless of any sort of third or medium, and in particular regardless of any law of action.<sup>54</sup>

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53a CP, 1.325. Notice that the idea of reality first comes up in connection with Secondness. This is not the reality of philosophy based on a theory of universals which are founded in things, but rather realism as opposed to idealism. That is, in Firstness the quality is just "given," without saying whether it is outside the mind or not. In Secondness real objects are asserted which force themselves on consciousness from outside. This says nothing as yet about whether these real objects are merely disparate individuals, or whether they have something in common.

If Firstness is quality, a somewhat vague and potential thing, Secondness is fact, something perfectly individual. It happens here and now.<sup>55</sup> The facts in which Secondness is verified must exclude all reference to the general, and with it the permanent or eternal. For "generality is either of that negative sort which belongs to the merely potential, as such, and this is peculiar to the category of quality; or it is of that positive kind which belongs to conditional necessity, and this is peculiar to the category of law."<sup>56</sup> (Thirdness) This leaves for the category of fact the following: the contingent, or the accidentally actual; and force without law or reason, brute force. (For facts, inasmuch as they resist the will, are proverbially called brutal.)

Secondness, then, while excluding the general, yet in a very true sense includes the real, indeed almost constitutes it. "For the singular object is real; and reality is insistency. That is what we mean by 'reality.' It is the brute irrational insistency that forces us to acknowledge the reality of what we experience, that gives us our conviction of

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<sup>55</sup> CP, 1.419.

<sup>56</sup> CP, 1.427. In the negative generality there can perhaps be seen a parallel to prime matter, which is universal negatively inasmuch as it is in potency to all forms, whereas the positive generality would be similar to a universal properly so-called.

any singular."<sup>57</sup> Brute opposition requires that everything in the field of actuality should be individual. "Hic et nunc is the phrase perpetually in the mouth of Duns Scotus, who first elucidated individual existence."<sup>58</sup>

The idea of second, finally is easier to comprehend than that of first. Firstness was found to be so tender that you could not touch it without spoiling it, but Secondness "is eminently hard and tangible. . . . With what firstness

'The scarfed bark puts from her native bay;  
with what secondness

With overweathered ribs and ragged sails.' "<sup>59</sup>doth she return,  
Firstness is independent of Secondness, but Secondness is dependent upon Firstness inasmuch as it consists in opposition of a second quality to the first quality. But this will suffice for Secondness, for Thirdness yet remains to be explained.

"Category the Third is the Idea of that which is such as it is as being a Third, or Medium, between a Second and its First. That is to say, it is Representation as an element of the Phenomenon."<sup>60</sup> Some predominant ideas of Thirdness which

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<sup>57</sup> CP, 6.340. Attention is called to note 53a above, where it was shown that the reality of Secondness is that opposed to idealism, and not necessarily a system of universals.

<sup>58</sup> CP, 1.458.

<sup>59</sup> CP, 1.358.

<sup>60</sup> CP, 5.66.

are important in philosophy and science are generality, infinity, continuity, meaning, growth and intelligence. "A fork in a road is a third, it supposes three ways; a straight road, considered merely as a connection between two places is second, but so far as it implies passing through intermediate places it is third."<sup>61</sup>

Thirdness is the medium or connecting bond between the absolute first and last. It "is nothing but the character of an object which embodies Betweenness or Mediation in its simplest and most rudimentary form."<sup>62</sup> The character of Thirdness is "mediation, whereby a first and second are brought into relation."<sup>63</sup> Thirdness, for instance, is meaning, which stands for the object and gives rise to the idea, its interpretant. Again it is the "process intervening between the causal act and the effect."<sup>64</sup> Thus it can be seen clearly that Thirdness is a medium, a link, a connecting bond. But this does not seem to give it the character of law or generality that Peirce claimed for it. Whence do these come?

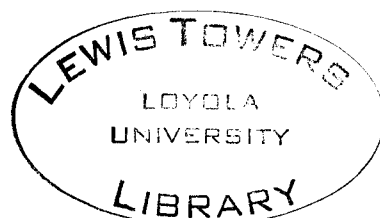
The general content of Thirdness will become somewhat clearer if notice is taken of the fact that the phaneron per-

61 CP, 1.337.

62 CP, 5.104.

63 CP, 6.32.

64 CP, 1.328.



mits us to make reliable forecasts of the future. "Five minutes of our waking life will hardly pass without our making some kind of prediction; and in the majority of cases these predictions are fulfilled in the event."<sup>65</sup> Such regularity in the foretelling of future events would be utterly unintelligible were the phaneron a thing which was merely particular. That cannot be its status. It must contain something which links it to what is to happen, and to what has happened, which something can only be an element of generality, for the very process of prediction is of a general nature, referring, in the majority of cases, not to a uniquely specific outcome, but to a general kind of outcome. When a cook, for instance, follows the instructions in her recipe-book for making an apple pie, she can predict that an apple pie will result, but she cannot predict the specific apple pie which will be produced.<sup>66</sup> She desires a certain kind of object. She moreover feels confident that the recipe will produce the desired result; that is, she feels that her prediction has a tendency to be fulfilled.<sup>67</sup> Yet this "is to say that the future events are in a measure really gov-

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65 CP, 1.26.

66 CP, 1.341.

67 See Goudge, Thought of C. S. Peirce, 91-92.



erned by a law."<sup>68</sup> Generality and law are the heart of Thirdness, and Peirce vehemently stressed this point: "This mode of being which consists, mind my word if you please, the mode of being which consists in the fact that future facts of Secondness will take on a determinate general character, I call a Thirdness."<sup>69</sup> And again: Thirdness "is that which is what it is by virtue of imparting a quality to reactions in the future."<sup>70</sup>

The way that words are used demonstrates how Thirdness as law intervenes in the phaneron of meaning. Every general term implies an inexhaustible series of conditional predictions, in all of which it will be verified. Take any predicate:

I say of a stone that it is hard. That means that so long as the stone remains hard, every essay to scratch it by the moderate pressure of a knife will surely fail. To call the stone hard is to predict that no matter how often you try the experiment, it will fail every time. That innumerable series of conditional predictions is involved in the meaning of this lowly adjective. Whatever may have been done will not begin to exhaust its meaning.<sup>71</sup>

The word hard here expresses a law that will hold true for an indefinite time. In like manner, the vast majority of words are

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68 CP, 1.26.

69 Ibid.

70 CP, 1.343.

71 CP, 1.615.

saturated with the regularity of Thirdness.

The reason for this is, as was mentioned above, the triadic function of a symbol of meaning. Unless the symbol, its object, and the interpretant are present, the symbol has no meaning. When these three are present, however, the symbol is meaningful. Thus an even clearer explanation is had for Peirce's synonyms for Thirdness, Representation or Mediation.<sup>72</sup>

The point to be noticed here in Peirce's system is not so much the fact that he has a general law, but rather the principle behind that law. For the scholastics, a thing is hard not because it will resist scratching in the future, but because it has a definite quiddity whereby it is hard here and now, without any reference to the future. Thus the essence as a nature (principium operationis) works in a definite manner because it already depends upon the essence as such (quod quid est) of the object. Peirce seems to miss this point, and his meaning of the universal is not founded on the essence of the thing, but is related to the ideas of prediction, law, operation, and effect, thus placing the essence of the universal in a relation to another event. It seems that Peirce, instead of aiming at finding out what a thing really is, and at defining its true nature, rather aims at describing how a thing behaves in various circumstances, and especially, whether there are any

regularities in its behavior.<sup>73</sup> The scholastics never split the dual notion of essence as quiddity and as nature, whereas peirce seems to have retained only the notion of essence as nature, and to have rejected the idea of quiddity as something distinct from the effects which the thing produces.

Be this as it may, the representative and general character of Thirdness gives to the category a feature which peirce alludes to frequently in the Collected Papers. Thirdness marks off his philosophy as a realism set over against the nominalism which is rampant in modern circles. But the question might be raised whether phenomenology can be the basis for a realism. Does the triad on which representation and generality are based fall under the observational method proper to phenomenology, or does it include an element not given in simple observation? Peirce would say that Thirdness is reached by observation, and his reasons are these. Although the general is not directly perceived in the particular ("an extraordinarily crude opinion"<sup>74</sup>), for "the general is not capable of full actualization in the world of action and reaction but is of the

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73 See this passage, for instance: "The predicate, hardness, is not invented by men, as the word is, but is really and truly in the hard things and is one in them all, as a description of habit, disposition, or behavior. CP, I.27n. (Last italics not in the original.)

74 CP, 2.26.

nature of what is thought,"<sup>75</sup> still it is part of the phaneron, and so can be detected by phenomenological observation. Thus phenomenology and Thirdness in particular can serve as the basis for a realistic philosophy. And it is such a realistic philosophy that Peirce claims to have constructed. The final task of this chapter will be, therefore, to examine Peirce's realism. First some limits will be placed to his realism by showing what it is not, and then a preliminary formulation of the doctrine will be worked out.

The distinction between realism as opposed to idealism and realism as opposed to nominalism has already been indicated. Although this thesis is primarily concerned with realism in the second sense as opposed to nominalism, a short vindication of Peirce's realism as opposed to idealism should be undertaken just to show that Peirce is working with real things.

Texts in which Peirce maintains the reality of things independent of the workings of the mind are numerous, and could be multiplied almost ad infinitum. The following are selected as typical: "What, then, is a quality? Before answering this, it will be well to say what it is not. It is not anything which is dependent, in its being, upon mind, whether in the form of sense or in that of thought."<sup>76</sup> "That is real which

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<sup>75</sup> CP, 1.27.

<sup>76</sup> CP, 1.422. See also CP, 1.175; 5.352; 6.495.

has such and such characters, whether anybody thinks it to have those characters or not."<sup>77</sup> "That which any true proposition asserts is real, in the sense of being as it is regardless of what you or I may think about it."<sup>78</sup> "For the singular object is real; and reality is insistency. That is what we mean by 'reality.' It is the brute irrational insistency that forces us to acknowledge the reality of what we experience, that gives us our conviction of any singular."<sup>79</sup>

In addition to this explicit contention that extra-mental objects exist, one may ask whether Peirce ever definitely rejected idealism verbatim. The question would be well put, and perhaps a little difficult to answer. Passages such as the following throw at first a dubious light on Peircean realism, but his explanation will show the distinction he made to avoid idealism:

This ideal first is the particular thing-in-itself. It does not exist as such. That is, there is no thing which is in-itself in the sense of not being relative to the mind, though things which are relative to the mind doubtless are, apart from that relation.<sup>80</sup>

Except for the final saving adversative clause, this statement

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77 CP, 5.430. See also CP, 5.311, 405, 408, 565.

78 CP, 5.432. See also CP, 5.407; 6, 349, 393, 453.

79 CP, 6.340. See also CP, 2.337; 6.327; Fraser's Berkeley, 454-458.

80 CP, 5.311.

is very close to idealism. That Peirce desired a realism, though, seems to be apparent from the emphasis he used later in the same paragraph:

And what do we mean by the real? It is a conception which we must first have had when we discovered that there was an unreal, an illusion; that is, when we first corrected ourselves. Now the distinction for which alone this fact logically called, was between an ens relative to private inward determinations, to the negations belonging to idiosyncrasy, and an ens such as would stand in the long run. The real, then, is that which sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you.<sup>81</sup>

Peirce elsewhere employs a more frontal attack on idealism:

But what evidence is there that we can immediately know only what is 'present' to the mind? The idealists generally treat this as self-evident; but, as Clifford jestingly says, 'it is evident' is a phrase which only means 'we do not know how to prove.'<sup>82</sup>

He then continues:

Obviously, then, the first move toward beating idealism at its own game is to remark that we apprehend our own ideas only as flowing in time, and since neither the future nor the past, however near they may be, is present, there is as much difficulty in conceiving our perception of what passes within us as in conceiving external perception. . . . Once grant immediate knowledge in time, and what becomes of the idealist theory that we immediately know only the present? For the present can contain no time.<sup>83</sup>

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81 Ibid.

82 CP, 1.38.

83 Ibid.

In discussing Kant's Critic of the Pure Reason, Peirce again becomes explicit: "But we have direct experience of things in themselves. Nothing can be more completely false than that we can experience only our own ideas."<sup>84</sup> Of Berkeley he says:

"The thought thinking and the immediate thought-object are the very same thing regarded from different points of view. Therefore, Berkeley was, so far, entirely in the right; although he blundered when from that manifest truth he inferred his idealism."<sup>85</sup>

It might be in place to ask whether, despite his rejection of idealism, Peirce held any type of phenomenalism similar to that of William James. Phenomenal idealism as taught by James states that the objects of knowledge are not things, nor the real appearances of things, but their appearances as they are viewed within the mind. In other words, the only reality is sensations as we experience them. James' system relies on this principle at every turn, as is evidenced by this short, but characteristic, selection: "Now my contention is exactly the reverse of this. Experience, I believe, has no such inner duplicity; and the separation of it into consciousness and content comes, not by way of subtraction, but by way of addition."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> CP, 6.95.

<sup>85</sup> CP, 6.339.

<sup>86</sup> William James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, New York, 1943, 9.

to put the fact baldly, James preaches that sensation is merely an "awareness of" without being an "awareness of a distinct reality," a mere subjective state which does not posit an external reality other than the very sensation.

The fact that Peirce denied any sort of Platonic entity or substance behind the appearances of things<sup>86a</sup> may seem to necessitate his adoption of phenomenalism, following the same pattern as James. Not so, however, for Peirce did not make the same identification of subject and object that James did, and hence for Peirce the correspondence theory of truth still had meaning.<sup>87</sup> This is corroborated by what has already been said about the category of Firstness, which has been shown to be a quality which "is not anything which is dependent, in its being, upon mind, whether in the form of sense or in that of thought."<sup>87a</sup> Again "that is real which has such and such characters, whether anybody thinks it to have those characters or not."<sup>88</sup> In these

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86a In note 89 it is shown how Peirce's denial of substance does not necessarily lead him to a denial of real things.

87 See James Ward Smith, "Pragmatism, Realism, and Positivism in the United States," Mind, LXI, April, 1952, especially 191, 193, 195, 198, where the author shows that Peirce limited the pragmatic maxim to the question of meaning, and did not let it interfere with the theory of truth, whereas James constantly muddled theory of meaning and theory of truth."

87a CP, 1.422.

88 CP, 5.430.



and many other places Peirce not only rejects absolute idealism, but also demands that real objects exist separate from the thought of them, thus repudiating phenomenal idealism also.

Having now established that Peirce held that there were existent singulars which do not depend upon the mind for their being,<sup>89</sup> the next task is to see what kind of reality is characteristic of these singulars. Are they merely grouped together under convenient classifications in a nominalist theory? Or are they universals in themselves, partaking of a Platonism? Or is there some other possibility? These questions deserve careful study.

Peirce's realism, taking realism now in the second sense as opposed to nominalism, truly rejects the nominalistic theory. This is clear from the numerous refutations of nominalism given at the beginning of this chapter. Therefore

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<sup>89</sup> This thesis does not go into the question of just what these real things are. Peirce's doctrine on substance is somewhat of a matter of dispute, and it would seem that he denied its reality, except inasmuch as substance is a kind of regularity or habit. (CP, 1.411) Certainly, however, he claimed that at least accidents were real, not precisely qua accidents (for a subject would then be required), but qua "appearing things" or "given." It may be that Peirce's aversion to admitting the existence of substance was due to a reluctance to embrace the Lockean idea of unknown substrate. By saying that only qualities are real, Peirce may have been merely reiterating one of the basic tenets of realism—that there is nothing in reality which is an unknown ding-an-sich. Be that as it may, he does admit real things, and therefore the question can be legitimately put whether these real objects are linked together in any kind of generality.

Peirce's doctrine of realism falls somewhere in that line of opinions which hold that "man, horse, and other names of natural classes, correspond with [what] all men, or all horses, really have in common, independent of our thought."<sup>90</sup>

Nor does Peirce's realism entail a Platonic world of subsistent ideas or universal forms. Peirce asserts his stand on this matter firmly:

Every realist must, as such, admit that a general is a term and therefore a sign. If, in addition, he holds that it is an absolute exemplar, this Platonism passes quite beyond the question of nominalism and realism; and indeed the doctrine of Platonic ideas has been held by the extremest nominalists.<sup>91</sup>

This passage was written towards the end of Peirce's literary work. At the very beginning of his career he had also adhered to this same opinion, for in 1871 he had said: "The notion that the controversy between realism and nominalism had anything to do with Platonic ideas is a mere product of the imagination, which the slightest examination of the books would suffice to disprove."<sup>92</sup>

Against this opinion, Feibleman<sup>93</sup> contends that Peirce did hold a doctrine of Platonic ideas, and he bolsters his con-

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90 Fraser's Berkeley, 454.

91 CP, 5.470.

92 Fraser's Berkeley, 458.

93 Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy, 179.

tention by several texts. Although the arguments are convincing at first sight, a closer study of the passages in question still seems to allow the contrary interpretation. For instance, Peirce is quoted as saying that the ideas in the existing world are off-shoots from, or arbitrary determinations of, a world of ideas, a Platonic world.<sup>94</sup> But what does Peirce understand by these yet undetermined ideas which exist in the Platonic world? In another text Peirce explains what he means by "an idea that is in no mind" and which had not yet attained full being. These undetermined ideas thus have "a mere potential being, a being in futuro," which keeps them from being "utter nothingness."<sup>95</sup> The Platonic world, or so it seems to the present writer, turns out to be analogous to the Thomistic absolute order in which all essences exist absolved from the conditions of singularity and universality.<sup>96</sup>

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94 CP, 6.192.

95 CP, 1.218. Peirce is not merely reducing these undetermined ideas to the state of passive potency, for he says that this potential being they have "would not be the utter nothingness which would befall matter (or spirit) if it were to be deprived of the governance of ideas. . . . For matter would thus not only not actually exist, but it would not have even a potential existence, since potentiality is an affair of ideas. It would be just downright Nothing." (*Ibid.*) Therefore the interpretation given in the text of the thesis seems licit.

96 See, for instance, St. Thomas Aquinas, De Ente et Essentia, in S. Thomas Aquinatis Opuscula Omnia necnon Opera Minora, ed. Joannes Perrier, O.P., Paris, 1949, Chap. III, (I, 34-38). Peirce's undetermined ideas would not be universals

Another failing common to theories of realism which is eliminated by Peirce is that the generals exist in the same way that individual facts do. He is not one of those realists who believe, for instance, that the law of gravitation exists "in nature" precisely in the same way as particular falling bodies exist.<sup>97</sup> Peirce's distinction between Secondness and Thirdness prevents this hypostasis of generals, for, as has been shown, existence is limited to individual facts by Secondness, and cannot properly be predicated of generals. A Realist need not maintain the existence of generals; he need only uphold their reality.<sup>98</sup> That is, Peirce conceives of existence as a special mode of reality, just as reality in its turn is a special mode of being. Just as there can be being with no complete reality (on, for instance, Protagoras' assumption that man is the measure of all things), so there can be reality without existence, for existence is an absolutely determinate form of reality.<sup>99</sup> Peirce admits that generals are real, but he does not

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in themselves (thus avoiding Platonism), and yet they are not determined to a particular being. They could therefore be the nature according to its absolute consideration, neither particular nor universal.

97 CP, 1.27n.

98 Peirce quite often thus distinguishes existence and reality, the latter of which has the wider extension. For instance, in CP, 6.349, he says: "I call your attention to the fact that reality and existence are two different things." See also CP, 3.93.

99 CP, 6.349 contains an explanation of this point.

wish to accord to them the same absolutely determinate existence which belongs to individuals as such.

Thus does Peirce avoid several of the more common errors made by proponents of realism in the past. The next step must be to explain what he himself held on the universality, or the generality as he preferred to call it,<sup>100</sup> of real things. The problem to be solved now is to ascertain the precise character of the "something" which all members of a class have in common, and how it is related to the concrete individual on the one hand and to the abstract universal concept on the other.

Peirce's doctrine seems to evolve along the following lines. Only singular things exist apart from thought.<sup>101</sup> But the nature, or the intelligible content, "is the very same nature which in the mind is universal and in re is singular."<sup>102</sup> Or, to sum up:

The truth is, therefore, that that real nature which exists in re, apart from all action of the intellect, though in itself, apart from its relations, it be singular, yet is actually universal as it exists in

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100 "This word [universal] was used in the Middle Ages where we should now use the word General. . . .When the Scholastics talk of universals, they merely mean general terms." (CP, 2.367.)

101 CP, 6.495; Fraser's Berkeley, 459.

102 Fraser's Berkeley, 459.

relation to the mind.<sup>103</sup>

A fair objection to the use of this last passage would be to say that Peirce is only summarizing Scotus' position here, and not stating his own opinion. That might be true if the same thought were not to recur again in Peirce's writings, but the continual outcropping of this idea forces one to ascribe it to Peirce himself. In an imaginary dialogue between a pragmatist and his opponent, Peirce adopts as his opinion the doctrine of the great doctors of the past, who did not believe that generals existed, "but regarded generals as modes of determination of individuals; and such modes were recognized as being of the nature of thought."<sup>104</sup> The question is settled in the same tenor, but more conclusively, in this passage:

There is no man of whom all further determination can be denied, yet there is a man, abstraction being made of all further determination. There is a real difference between man irrespective of what the other determinations may be, and man with this or that particular series of determinations, although undoubtedly this difference is only relative to the mind and not in re.<sup>105</sup>

The "man irrespective of what the other determinations may be" is the nature as it exists in relation to the mind, while the "man with this or that particular series of determinations" is the existing singular object.

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103 Ibid., 459-460.

104 CP, 5.503.

105 CP, 5.312.

Peirce hastens to answer an objection that such a view of the universal destroys its reality because it makes it depend on a relation to thought. The belief that the real must be independent of reflective activity, or be a thing in itself, is false. The notion of a thing in itself, exaggerated "in the usual philosopher fashion," leads to a self-contradiction, for if it is an object of thought, it cannot be at the same time wholly outside the pales of the mind,<sup>106</sup> for a man cannot have any conception of an incognizable reality.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, it is quite plain that "a realist is simply one who knows no more recondite reality than that which is represented in a true representation. Since, therefore, the word 'man' is true of something, that which 'man' means is real."<sup>108</sup> It is the nominalist who runs into difficulties here, for he maintains that there is an unknowable something which allows you to predicate man of all its inferiors, while the realist simply states that "man" is a universal nature which can therefore be applied to the inferiors because of an identical intelligible content.

But this simple analysis, so close to the doctrine familiar to scholastics, will not suffice for an adequate treatment of Peircean realism. While it is true that the fundamen-

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106 CP, 5.525.

107 CP, 5.312.

108 Ibid.

tals of his system have now been traced, there yet remain several quite interesting elaborations on this basic theory which deserve to be noticed. If the treatment given to these additional points is not conclusive or satisfying in the present context, an attempt will be made later in the thesis to show their full import in relation to other factors to be introduced in subsequent chapters.

The first fact to be noted, and one of capital importance in Peirce's system of universals, is the striking difference in the fundamentum in re which is the basis of the formal universal for Peirce, and for Scotus and the other scholastics. That intrinsic "something" in each being which allows a universal to be predicated of it is, for Aristotle and the scholastics, the substantial form or nature of the being by which the being is and by which it is this being.<sup>108a</sup> Peirce does not get his generality from this source; rather the element in a being which serves as the basis for generality is a habit of action, not yet fully determined, but tending towards fuller and fuller determination as the habit becomes more universal. (That is, as it applies to more and more situations.)

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<sup>108a</sup> St. Thomas, for instance, says: "Et ideo relinquatur quod ratio generis vel speciei conveniat essentiae secundum quod significatur per modum totius, ut nomine hominis vel animalis, prout implicite et indistincte continet totum quod in individuo est." De Ente et Essentia, Chap. III, ed. Perrier, I, 35.



The roots of this theory lie in Peirce's adaptation of evolutionary ideas from Darwinism in his principle of chance, in his theory of pragmatism which holds that meaning is all the possible results of an idea, and in his teaching, borrowed more from Lamarck than from Darwin, on mind as a habit-taking faculty.<sup>109</sup> To explain all of these fully would take a good-sized book, but in a short space their influence on generality can at least be pointed out summarily.

Here is how Darwinism militates against the Aristotelian theory of fixed<sup>110</sup> forms, or "universals infrangibly established for once and all in the beginning of time, unadaptive and unalterable forever."<sup>111</sup> Since evolution presumes that new species are continually coming into existence, the members of these new species must be related to one another by a universal not hitherto had in nature. But since the very

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109 See CP, 6.15-17, for a summary of the various theories of evolution. Also 6.300 for Lamarck.

110 It may be that the connotation of "fixed" form led Peirce to look elsewhere for the foundation for his universal in things. If "fixed" is interpreted as "static," then there would be no room for development or change in forms. But if a "fixed" form can at the same time be a natura, or principium operationis, as it is for Aristotle and the scholastics, then the very teleology of the operation of a being would point to its development.

111 Feibleman, Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy,

mode of being of Aristotle's forms is in re, a transition from one to another becomes impossible almost by definition. Since, therefore, Darwinian evolution<sup>112</sup> seemed to make the doctrine of forms as fixed, unchangeable entities untenable, Peirce looked afield for a theory that would allow his teaching on the reality of generals to fit the Procrustean bed of no stable<sup>113</sup> forms without undergoing such changes as to render universals unreal. He found such a theory in the principle of chance and the teaching that habit, or law, is one of the predominant features of nature, whether mind or matter.

Peirce, in a paper entitled "The Doctrine of Necessity Examined,"<sup>114</sup> attacked rigid necessitarianism and its consequent of fixed forms on several counts. They are principally these: 1) The general prevalence of growth; 2) the variety of the uni-

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112 Peirce, it is plain, was much impressed by the work of Darwin. In 1900 he said that it was his "inestimable privilege to have felt as a young man the warmth of the steadily burning enthusiasm of the scientific generation of Darwin." (Smithsonian Institution Reports, Washington, 1900, 694.) But he never fully adopted the theory as such, although elements of it continued to influence him in other lines of thought.

113 Once again it is pointed out that Peirce seems to have identified the notions of a fixed, or stable, form and of a static form. Not wanting the latter, he also rejected the former, and therefore had to seek another foundation for his generals. Scholastics, however, say that the form is fixed, and therefore have an intrinsic basis for universality, while the form as a nature serves also as the principle of operation and development of the being.

114 CP, 6.35-65.

verse, which springs from chance, and is manifestly inexplicable; and 3) the existence of law, which requires to be explained, and like everything else which is to be explained, must be explained by something else, that is, by non-law or real chance. Peirce, conceiving matter somewhat as the ancients, held that the whole world has evolved to its present state through laws which have developed from the chaotic mass that existed in the beginning, and is progressing to even further determination and perfection. But what is it that explains why this species should arise rather than that? It is chance. Without chance things would be determined to one, and nothing new would ever come into existence. Yet chance, on the other hand, is also the root of law.<sup>115</sup> For once an event has occurred by chance, a habit of some sort is set up in the matter which makes the same event more likely to happen again than its opposite. Yet what is law if not a rule, or habit, saying that this given event will happen rather than that in these circumstances? So law, which was seen to be one manifestation of Thirdness, causes the particular existents characterized by Firstness and Secondness to conform to an indefinite future. Thus, although not existing in the realm of fact, Thirdness as law may be said to govern that realm, since future events of Firstness and Secondness will conform to it. But even law itself is not fully

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<sup>115</sup> CP, 6.612 (fin.).

determined (thus again there is no fixed "form" to serve as the basis for generality), for if law were rigidly carried out "all habits would at once become so fixed as to give room for no further formation of habits."<sup>116</sup>

This last phrase can be better elucidated by considering a twofold meaning of habit. Habit can be a form, or principle of operation, as a habit of almsgiving flows from a form in the individual. Or again habit may be considered as law, the way an operation takes place under given circumstances. In Peirce's Collected Papers it is very difficult to find definite references to habit as form, accidental or substantial, especially in the sixth volume which treats of the matter extensively. Therefore Peirce looked upon habit almost exclusively as law, which gives the key to the root weakness in his theory of universals. Peirce never goes on to ask what there is in the thing which is the principle of the law. He has the operation, but the principle of the operation is lacking. This has been already noted above in connection with the representative function of Thirdness.

But has Peirce, in destroying all fixed forms and habits, cut himself off from a realistic explanation of universals? Peirce thought not. For, although he had no form intrinsic to the thing to serve as a basis for universality,

he did retain the principle pointed out above in the section on Thirdness, namely, that generals are laws, for Thirdness is a means of predicting what will generally happen. From this premise Peirce deduced—or it will be deduced for him here—the following syllogism:

Generals are laws,

@ laws are relations (not forms).

∴ generals are relations (not forms).

The truth of the minor proposition is manifest from what has just been said on the preceding page about habit as equivalent to law, and not to form. By law, in other words, Peirce does not mean the form from which the habit flows, but the law as having a reaction on other events. And once he had settled upon a relation rather than a form as the fundamentum in re (or should it be inter res?) for universality, his next move was obvious. By introducing a logic of relatives he believed that he could retain his claim to the title of realist. "The great difference," he explains, "between the logic of relatives and ordinary logic is that the former regards the form of relation in all its generality and in its different possible species while the latter is tied down to the matter of the single special relation of similarity."<sup>117</sup> Thus ordinary logic has much to do with genera and species, or sets of objects "comprising all

that stand to one another in a special relation of similarity,"<sup>118</sup> whereas the logic of relatives goes further, and refers to systems which are sets of objects "comprising all that stand to one another in a group of connected relations."<sup>119</sup> The mode of reasoning for the two logics varies, for

Induction according to ordinary logic rises from the contemplation of a sample of a class to that of the whole class; but according to the logic of relatives it rises from the contemplation of a fragment of a system to the envisagement of the complete system.<sup>120</sup>

What is the logical consequence of this new logic?

The old idea of universal as unum aptum quod praedicari potest de pluribus can be retained, but in a new setting. No longer is it one form which can be found in many individuals, for the form is not fixed, but ever-changing.<sup>121</sup> The same law, or habit, however, can apply to the same set of objects, for, even though they are changing (or at least becoming more and more determined with the passage of time), still the same relation between them continues to hold true. This relationism, to use Abbot's word, is found also in Peirce's theory of pragmatism, where the being of the concept and truth does not consist in a

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118 Ibid.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.

121 It hardly need be repeated that Peirce has not yet found a principle for the operation of the habit as long as he denies a form in the being.

static unity, but in their relation to other events. For instance, the

conception, that is, the rational purport of a word or other expression, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life; so that, since obviously nothing that might not result from experiment can have any direct bearing upon conduct, if one can define accurately all the conceivable experimental phenomena which the affirmation or denial of a concept could imply, one will have therein a complete definition of the concept, and there is absolutely nothing more in it.<sup>122</sup>

Similarly:

The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real.<sup>123</sup>

Truth, then, is what everyone will agree upon, for, as Peirce elsewhere remarks, if there are no dissenters from an opinion, then that opinion can be accepted as true (especially if the truth is arrived at through experimentation, for then there will have been other fruitless experiments which did not give the results contained in the one truth finally arrived at, and hence were discarded.)

One may wonder how the mind could be satisfied with accepting truth or universality as merely a relation between things, and not wanting to pin it down to a single determined

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122 CP, 5.412.

123 CP, 5.407.

definition or essence which it can understand. Peirce would answer this objection by saying that it is the very nature of the mind to be always looking for the further determinations of things, and he would demonstrate his contention by an application of the principle of continuity. Just as the event which first took place by chance in matter becomes a habit and thus can be predicted by means of a law, so the mind also becomes accustomed to seeing things happen in a certain order, and an association of ideas is built up which permits the mind to formulate a general law.<sup>124</sup>

Thus mind and matter are governed by the same habit, and as habits and laws in matter move forward to greater and greater determination, mind moves along with them pari passu. "The essence of Reason is such that its being never can have been completely perfected. It always must be in a state of incipency, of growth. It is like the character of a man which consists in the ideas that he will conceive and in the efforts

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<sup>124</sup> Peirce attempts to free himself from the charge of materialism, however, by stating that mind is not governed by mechanical law, but rather that the "one original law [is] the recognized law of mind, the law of association, of which the laws of matter are regarded as mere special results." (CP, 6.277) Or again: "Matter would be nothing but mind that had such indurated habits as to cause it to act with a peculiarly high degree of mechanical regularity, or routine." (Ibid.)

It is also worthwhile to mention here the third principle in Peirce along with chance and habit-taking which explains the existence of law in the universe, namely, love, or association. Through this association, as mentioned in the text, the mind is able to form a law correlating similar events.



that he will make, and which only develops as the occasions actually arise."<sup>125</sup>

That, in brief, is a picture of Peirce's realism. He does have real objects, thus rejecting idealism. And he holds a common nature which is singular in the individual things, but universal in its relation to the mind. Yet this common nature is not a fixed Aristotelian form (not something really intrinsic to the being, for Peirce saw an intrinsic form as only a static form), but something ever developing along Darwinian lines. But the new logic of relatives can still find universality in comparing a fragment of a system, changing though it be, to the whole system. The mind, moreover, is satisfied with this because it is a habit-taking faculty, and takes as true that which is presented to it most frequently. With this sketch of Peirce's realism completed, it is time finally to examine some of its sources.

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125 CP, 1.615.

## CHAPTER III

### SOURCES OF PEIRCE'S REALISM

Although the reader may be anxious to see where Peirce's theory of realism will lead him, he must restrain his interest while an outline is sketched depicting the background in which Peirce worked. To understand and evaluate his system fully, account must be taken of his knowledge of Duns Scotus and Francis Ellingwood Abbot, and the influence they had on him. With a clear understanding of these sources, it will be easier to detect and separate various factors in Peirce's own system. The realism of Scotus will be treated in the first part of this chapter, followed by a scrutiny of Abbot's theory. Then in the next chapter Peirce's use of these sources will be investigated.

In his doctrine of universals, Duns Scotus largely followed the theory of his time, which St. Thomas too had accepted. Universals exist in three ways: 1) before things, as ideas in the mind of God; 2) in things, as their essence; and 3) after things, as abstract concepts in the minds of men.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Bernhard Geyer, Friedrich Ueberwegs Grundriss der

setting aside the first type of universal, which is usually called universale in causando, the primary aim of these pages will be to establish the relationship between the universal nature as it exists in things and that same nature as the mind knows it.

The first point to be taken up is the relation of the formalities in the things to the concepts of them in the mind. A too rapid appraisal of Scotus' doctrine here leads many to impute to him an exaggerated realism. It may be that this charge is true, for Scotus certainly leaves himself more open to the accusation than most of the other scholastics; however, his doctrine will be given here with no judgment as to whether it verges too far toward the reification of universals or not.

What, then, are the formalities? They are not, first of all, the notes in a thing which correspond to the concepts had in the mind. This position would ineluctably lead into an exaggerated realism. They are, rather, distinct realities in a thing, to each of which corresponds a distinct concept. These entities, or realities, do not exist apart or separately from one another, but there does exist in reality a certain distinction between them to which the distinction between their concepts in the mind answers. Thus, according to the formal distinction,

a being will possess as many formal distinctions as the intellect can form distinct concepts about that being. Scotus does not go from the intellect to the thing, but in the thing there are objects which must be grasped by such diverse concepts.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the formal distinction is a real distinction, that is, in reality the formal distinction precedes all acts of the intellect. It is not, however, a distinction between things which exist apart from one another, but simply states that one formality is not another formality, or that there is no formal identity present. In fact, Scotus would rather speak of a formal non-identity than of a formal distinction.<sup>3</sup> Thus, because in a being the formal note of rationality does not include the formal note of animality or corporeity, there is in this being a formal non-identity, or distinction, precisely because of the lack of formal identity. Therefore Scotus can hold that his universals are not products of the intellect applied to the

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2 "Non quod ratio accipiatur pro differentia formata ab intellectu, sed ut ratio accipitur pro quidditate rei secundum quod quidditas est obiectum intellectus." *Opus Oxoniense*, I, d. 2, q. 7, n. 43, Vives ed., Paris, 1891-1895, VIII, 603a.

The author of this thesis has been fortunate in having at his disposal a reportatio of a course on The Human Soul in John Duns Scotus given by Professor Etienne Gilson at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto, October-December, 1950. Lectures Three to Eleven were especially helpful. The reportatio was taken by Michael M. Montague, S.J.

3 "Melius est uti ista negativa, hoc non est formaliter idem, quam hoc est sic et sic distinctum." *Ibid*, n. 44, 603b.

outside world, but are found in things by the mind.<sup>4</sup>

But it yet remains to be seen in what relation the universal stands to the mind and to things. For Scotus "universal" means two things: subjectively it is the notion produced by the mind, the second intention which exists only in the intellect; objectively it stands for the absolute essence of the thing considered in its universal aspects. This quiddity of itself is neither universal nor singular, but indifferent, and constitutes the direct object of the intellect.<sup>5</sup> Scotus is at great pains to steer the middle course between extreme realism

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4 "Universalis non sunt fictiones intellectus, tunc enim nunquam in quid praedicarentur de re extra; nec ad definitionem pertinerent, nec Metaphysica differret a Logica, imo omnis scientia esset Logica, quia de universali." Theoremata Subtilissima, IV, Vives ed., V, 18a.

The authenticity of the Theoremata has been the matter of much dispute. Wadding and the other early Scotists considered it authentic. Longpré and other moderns have held the opposing view. The latest trend, however, seems to be toward regarding it as possibly authentic, and this is the view of Baudry, Balic, Boehner, and finally Gilson, who argues from the internal evidence of the general agreement in doctrine of the Theoremata with the rest of Scotus' genuine writings. At any rate, if use is made of it only to state in clearer terms what other passages hint at, Scotus' doctrine will not be mutilated by the use of the work, even though it should prove to be spurious.

5 "Universale accipitur aliquando pro intentione secunda, quae sequitur operationem primam intellectus, qua intelligitur quidditas absolute. . . . Aliquando autem universale accipitur pro re subjecta intentioni secundae, id est pro quidditate rei absoluta, quae quantum est de se, nec est universalis, nec singularis, sed de se est indifferens, et tale est objectum intellectus directum." Quaestiones super Libros Aristotelis de Anima, XVII, n. 14, Vives ed., III, 581a-b.

and nominalism, and thus to safeguard the reality of the individual without jeopardizing the objective validity of the universal. Therefore he devotes long passages to a minute explanation of the relation between the universal in the thing and the universal in the mind. He wishes to combine logical conceptualism with metaphysical realism without a hypostatization of the concept.

The actually existing thing is the individual. Different individuals of the same species share a common nature, but that nature is not of itself common, for it does not exist in the individual sub ratione communis. The community is rather a mode which belongs to the nature only insofar as it is conceived as common or universal by the mind.<sup>6</sup> Logically, however, it is prior to both these conditions and, regarded in the light of this priority, it is the essence or quod quid est, the metaphysical "what," which is per se the object of the intellect.<sup>7</sup>

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6 "Dicí potest, quod ratio communis, vel suppositi, non attribuitur ei, ut existit, sed ut concipitur apud intellectum. . . . Igitur commune secundum quod habet rationem communis, est natura, prout concepta sub ratione dicibilis de pluribus." Quaestiones in Libros Perihermenias, I, q. 7, n. 4, Vives ed., I, 551-552.

7 "Qualiter autem potest hoc intelligi, potest aliquando videri per dictum Avicennae 5 Metaph. ubi vult quod equinitas sit tantum equinitas, nec ex se una, nec plures, nec universalis nec particularis. Intellige, non est ex se una, unitate. . . eo modo quo aliquid est universale factum ab intellectu, non ut objectum intellectus, nec est particularis de se; licet enim nunquam sit realiter sine aliquo istorum, non tamen est de se aliquod istorum, sed est prius naturaliter om-

As an absolute quiddity, then, it exists indifferently in the objective world of things, neither singular nor universal. But this is not the full picture: the common nature even in its relation to the mind is originally indifferent to representing the natura in se; universality is a further logical determination, for although the quiddity is known as universal, universality does not enter into the metaphysical concept of the natura as such, but is a logical addition.<sup>8</sup> Therefore the universal exists as actually universalized only in the mind, insofar as it is predicable of many individuals.<sup>9</sup> Despite this, however, one must not imagine that its unity is purely subjective, for in virtue of its existence in re as a nature it possesses an objective unity of its own, quite apart from the sub-

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nibus istis. Et secundum istam prioritatem naturalem est quod quid est et per se objectum intellectus." Opus Oxon., II, d. 3, q. 1, n. 7, Vives ed., XII, 48a-b.

8 "Non solum autem ipsa natura est de se indifferens ad esse in intellectu, et in particulari, ac per hoc ad esse universale et singulare, sed et ipsa habens esse in intellectu, non habet primo ex se universalitatem; licet enim ipsa intelligatur sub universalitate, ut sub modo intelligendi ipsam, tamen universalitas non est pars conceptus ejus primi, quia non conceptus Metaphysici sed Logici, Logicus enim considerat secundas intentiones applicatas primis." Ibid., 48b.

9 "Dico quod universale in actu non est nisi in intellectu, quia non est actu universale, nisi sit unum in multis et de multis, ita quod de multis est aptitudo proxima universalis in actu, quia non potest haberi in actu universale, quod ipsum est dicibile de alio. . . nisi per intellectum." Reportata Parisiensia, II, d. 2, q. 5, n. 12.

fective unity of the concept, a unity which is neither numerical nor merely conceptual, but a specific unity, and which, although less than a numerical unity, is yet none the less real.<sup>10</sup>

Why is the unity of the common nature a numerical unity which is less than real? Precisely because the only thing that can have real unity is the singular existing material object. The common nature, which is really only a stack of universal formalities, is indifferent to singularity or universality, and can be tied down to a singular thing only by haecceitas. What, though, is the nature of this haecceity, and why does Scotus make it an integral part of his system? First of all, Scotus needs haecceity to safeguard the unity of being. One may have wondered what has happened to the unity of being for Scotus, since there are various different formalities present in the same being. To St. Thomas such a situation is unthinkable, for a being can have only one substantial form. Esse is the actus essendi which makes a thing exist simpliciter. In Scotus the case is different. The esse which belongs to

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10 "Dico ad quaestionem concedendo. . . quod est unitas extra animam minor quam numeralis, ut specifica. . . . [n. 12] Tamen ista unitas realis media inter numeralem et rationis, non est differentia universalitatis, quia hoc est actu dicibile de multis; sed solum est indifferentia, secundum quam non repugnat sibi esse hoc et hoc simul, tamen non potest secundum istam realem unitatem minorem esse simul hoc et hoc, nisi in conceptu in intellectu, quod non est ex parte sui, quia equinitas est tantum equinitas." Ibid., n. 11-12.



each essence is the esse essentiae; being exists only through the esse existentiae, which comes to it through the form by which the whole is hoc ens, that is, a singular being completely defined in the order of quiddity. Haecceity is this ultimate actuality of the form.

The nature of haecceity can be outlined briefly: it must be a positive entity; it must not be in the common nature; and it must be able to enter into composition with the common nature. It cannot be negative, for then it would be nothing, and the inferior would not differ from the common nature. It must be something outside the common nature, for the common nature of itself can be found in many things, and that by which an individual is an individual must be perfectly individual for each single being. This positive entity, lastly, must be able to enter into composition with the common nature in order to form a being which is an unum per se.

One must not get a confused notion of haecceity, however, and imagine that it is the last of the forms which constitute a being. This perhaps would be the logical outgrowth of Scotus' system of essentialist metaphysics where the entire emphasis is placed on the line of quiddity, but it is not what Scotus wishes. Haecceity is that by which a res est haec. The res is already fully constituted in the line of quiddity through its forms of corporeity, animality, rationality, etc., and needs only the last "form" of haecceity to determine it to a particular

individual, just as rationality determines the genus to a species. But the parallel is not perfect. The common nature of rational animal, along with all the other forms it has, is already fully constituted in the line of essence. It does not need another form to give it individual existence.<sup>11</sup> Haecceity, therefore, is not a form, but the ultima realitas formae, or the ultima actualitas formae.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Minges<sup>13</sup> explains it in this

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11 What the essence needs to be individuated, of course, is not another determination in the line of essence, but a limitation of the essence so that it can be multiplied. This for St. Thomas is materia quantitate signata, as he points out in Lib. Boet. de Trin., q. 4, a. 2 and ad 3, Parma ed., XVII, 374-375. Addition of another form can never get Scotus out of the common nature or out of quasi-universality. Scotus therefore says that there is something in the quiddity, which makes the thing singular, but yet is not a quiddity.

12 In all finite beings, the property of the positive entity which individualizes the quiddity is not to add another quiddity to the first; but the effect of the positive individuating entity is to posit the whole quidditative entity (genus and difference) in a being of another sort than quiddity. This new order is the order of the singular. "Ista realitas individui est similis realitati specificae, quod est quasi actus determinans illam realitatem speciei quasi possibilem et potentialem, sed quoad hoc dissimilis, quia ista nunquam sumitur a forma addita, sed praecise ab ultima realitate formae. Quoad aliud etiam est dissimile, quia illa realitas specifica constituit compositum, cujus est pars, in esse quidditativo, quia ipsa est entitas quaedam quidditativa; ista autem entitas individui est primo diversa ab omni entitate quidditativa, quod probatur ex hoc, quia intelligendo quamcumque entitatem quidditativam, loquendo de quidditativa entitate limitata, non habetur in quidditate intellecta, unde ipsa sit haec; ergo illa entitas, quae de se est haec, est alia entitas a quidditate vel ab entitate quidditativa; non potest ergo constituere totum cujus est pars, in esse quidditativo, sed in esse alterius rationis." Opus Oxon., II, d. 3, q. 6, n. 12, Vives ed., XII, 135a. (Italics not in original.)

13 Parthenius Minges, O.F.M., Der angebliche exzessive Realismus des Duns Scotus, 1908, 46-47.

manner: The ultima realitas entis is not the last informing principle, but the numerical determination of the form and matter of the composite as this form and this matter. Gilson<sup>14</sup> makes this analogy: In a poor way, haecceity is comparable to a bud in the springtime which is just ready to burst; the haecceity is an energy that wants to burst up; it is in the form and yet is not the form, but a metaphysical energy which makes the individual to be the individual which it is.

Passing by the difficulties which this Scotistic doctrine engenders—this thesis is not attempting to defend Scotus, but to give a brief resumé of his doctrine on realism—some of the implications which the emphasis on haecceity gives rise to may be considered. In these will be found some of those distinctive features of Scotism which the other scholastics lacked, and which drew Peirce's attention to Duns more than to any other figure of the past, with the possible exception of Kant, whom, however, Peirce followed not as a disciple, but as a critic. One thing that haecceity resulted in was a decided emphasis on the singular, since the individual is constituted as such through a positive entity, and not by a more passive principle of individuation as the signate matter of St. Thomas. "His more scientific insistence on the concrete nature of reality," according to Harris, "gives to his thinking a distinctively

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14 Reportatio of the Human Soul In Scotus, Lecture Ten.

modern flavour. It is not enough for him that the particular should be somehow obscurely sensed; it is the primary reality and must therefore be intelligible per se."<sup>15</sup>

For by making the individual to be such through a positive entity, Scotus once again makes the singular an object of intuitive cognition. Without going into the question of whether Scotus held that there was intuitive knowledge of the singular as such as well as of the existence of the singular,<sup>16</sup> it can certainly be said that he laid much more stress on such knowledge than did St. Thomas. This can be seen in his rejection of the quidditas rei sensibilis as the natural object of the intellect. He rules this out on many grounds: Metaphysically speaking, the quiddity of a material thing cannot be the proper object of the intellect, for the science of sciences is metaphysics and metaphysics has for its object being qua being. Consequently, if the natural object of the intellect were the essence of a material thing, the science of metaphysics would be impossible.<sup>17</sup> From the theological viewpoint the pro-

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15 C.R.S. Harris, Duns Scotus, II, Oxford, 1927, 24.

16 Such is the thesis of Fr. Sebastian Day, O.F.M., in his Intuitive Cognition, St. Bonaventure, N.Y., 1947. Prof. Gilson, however, is "absolutely convinced that Scotus never held this doctrine for man in the present state." Reportatio of The Human Soul in Scotus, Lecture Eleven.

17 "Quidquid per se cognoscitur a potentia cognitiva, vel est ejus objectum primum, vel continetur sub illo objecto, ens autem, ut est communius sensibili, per se intelligitur ab

per object cannot be the quiddity of a material thing because the soul then could not naturally see God in the Beatific vision. Psychological grounds also rule this opinion out, for the intellect is part of the substance man, which is an intelligible univocally comparable with the angelic intellect. If both angels and men are intellectual substances, then they must both have the same proper object. The angels cannot have need of obtaining knowledge from the quiddities of material things; therefore man's intellect must know the quiddity in itself without knowing it as existing in the singular.<sup>18</sup> Scotus' prime reason for asserting this fact is that, as he sees it, others before him have overlooked the fundamental point that the quiddity of itself is equally indifferent to universality and singularity. What one sees first in the existing thing is neither the universal nor the singular; it is the natura communis. Due to the common nature, the cognition of the universal is possible, for it is not a property of the quiddity as quiddity that it exist in the singular, or be known as a universal.<sup>19</sup>

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intellectu nostro, alias Metaphysica non esset magis scientia transcendens quam Physica, ergo non potest aliquid esse primum objectum intellectus nostri, quod sit particularius ente, quia tunc ens in se nullo modo intelligeretur a nobis." Opus Oxon., I, d. 3, q. 3, m. 3, Vives ed., IX, 89-90.

18 "Nam secundum suam rationem, Angelus cum cognoscat perfecte quidditatem rei materialis, oportet quod ipsam aspiciat in phantasmate, quod est falsum." Opus Oxon., I, d. 3, q. 6, n. 28, Vives ed., IX, 292a.

19 "Licet ergo quidditas non existat nisi in supposito

And yet Scotus holds that the singular is known directly, before the universal.<sup>19a</sup> He correctly states that St. Thomas must rely on a return of the intellect to the phantasm to know the singular, for the matter which constitutes the Thomistic principle of individuation is necessarily confined to the sense powers and cannot enter the intellect. But Scotus objects to this explanation: "Haec responsio nulla est."<sup>20</sup> For the intellect must know either the singular or the universal first. It cannot know the singular first, since, according to Thomistic principles, the singular is not the object of direct intellectual cognition. Then the universal must be known first.

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vel singulari, potest tamen intelligi ab intellectu, non intelligendo quod existat in eo, et sic falsum est quod assumit, scilicet quod non possit intelligi quidditas, nisi ut existens in singulari intelligatur. Non enim est de ratione quidditatis, ut quidditas est, quod in singulari existat, licet non nisi in eo existat realiter." Ibid., 292a-b.

19a Typical passages are these: "Duplex est cognitio, scilicet abstractiva et intuitiva. . . et utraque cognitione potest cognosci tam natura, ut praecedit singularitatem, quam singulare, ut hoc." Ibid., III, d. 14, q. 3, n. 4, Vives ed., XIV, 524a. "Et sic comparando intellectum ad imaginationem, aliquando cognoscitur universale prius quam particulare: et hoc est verum, dum intellectus abstrahit universale a sensibili apprehenso per sensum particularem. Aliquando prius cognoscitur particulare: quod quidem fit, dum abstrahitur ratio universalis a phantasmate, seu a re particulari, ut est in imaginativa. Comparando autem intellectum ad sensum particularem, prior est notitia singularis, et a sensu, et ab intellectu, quam notitia universalis. De Rerum Principio, q. 13, a. 3, Vives ed., IV, 522b.

20 Opus Oxon., I, d. 3., q. 6, n. 28, Vives ed., IX, 292a.

But, on the other hand, it is self-contradictory to maintain that the universal can be known in the singular, at least if one speaks of a true universal secundum totam suam indifferen-  
tiam. In a singular object the universal is restricted to the singularity of the object which begets the sensible species. Therefore, it is impossible to hold that the intellect knows the universal through the phantasm representing the singular.

Scotus adduces positive proofs for the direct cognition of the singular also. First of all, if the singular were not naturally knowable, the Beatific Vision would be impossible.<sup>21</sup> The fact is also evident from purely philosophical grounds. Singularity for Scotus, as has been seen, is the ultimate perfection of the quiddity. If the quiddity is intelligible, then its ultimate perfection must be intelligible, and so the singular must be intelligible. Yet there is no science of the singular as such. But this is only due to the fallen nature of man, whose intellect is capable of knowing all being directly, yet because of the fall cannot use the powers of intellectual intuition. The intelligible is still known, but is known ut natura, non ut hoc.

And since the individuating difference and singular-

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21 "Concedo quod singulare est per se intelligibile, imo maxime intelligibile, quia nunquam beatificabitur intellectus nisi in intellectione singularis; puta essentiae divinae, ut haec." Rep. Paris., II, d. 12, q. 8, n. 10, Vives ed., XXIII, 40b.

ity are not in the nature as such—they are in the nature, but not in the nature as such—it is possible for man to know the natures of things without knowing the individuals intuitively.<sup>22</sup> Nor is it absurd to say that man has the capacity to intuit the singular, but cannot do so in the present life. He still has the power; he is unable to exercise it, just as a blind man still has the power of sight, but cannot here and now use it.

There in broad lines is the outline of Scotistic realism. The system pivots around the central ideas of the common nature and haecceity. The common nature, which expresses the various quiddities of things, becomes universal when conceived by the mind in relation to inferiors, and becomes individual when individuated in one singular existing thing through the perfection of haecceity, which is not a form, but the last actuality of the form. Because individuation follows upon something positive, the individual is given more emphasis by Scotus than by most scholastics; indeed, many of his followers have wished to say that we do have real intuitive knowledge of the singular. But even ruling this out, there remains a realism which is sufficiently demarcated from the rest of the scholastic

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22 Scotus recognized this when he stated that the individual goes beyond the essence of the thing: "Definitio exprimit quid est causae speciei solum; sed individuum exprimit plusquam quidditatem, et ideo ejus non est definitio propria." *Rep. Paris.*, II, d. 2, q. 8, n. 10, Vives ed., XXIII, 41a. He does not say that we cannot know the singular; he merely states that the knowledge had of it cannot be used for definitions.



positions to be characteristically the product of a distinct school. It is to this facet of scholasticism that Peirce was attracted early in his life. Following an exposition of the realism of Abbot, the next chapter will take up the influence these two men had on Peirce in the formation of his realism.

Francis Ellingwood Abbot (1836-1903) was from all accounts a misfit, a man constantly looking for a position in life that suited him and never finding it. Moving in a religious and philosophical background, he wandered from one pulpit to another in his search for a religion which would leave him free scope to exercise his liberal views. His philosophical acumen (doctorate from Harvard in 1881) was first displayed in several articles for The North American Review, and his Scientific Theism<sup>23</sup> won European acclaim, even being translated into German. He failed in several attempts to obtain a chair of philosophy at Cornell and Harvard, perhaps partially due to theological reasons. He did lecture for Josiah Royce at Harvard one year, publishing his lectures under the title of The Way Out of Agnosticism (1890). His last work was The Syllogistic Philosophy (1907), an elaborate technical synthesis of his thought which never became popular.

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<sup>23</sup> Boston, 1885. All quotations in this thesis are from the second edition, Boston, 1886.

The attention given to Abbot in this thesis is centered entirely on the Introduction to his Scientific Theism, a book which turned out to be more significant in the movement of American philosophic realism than in the cause of free religion. Its excellent exposition of objective relativism is important here not only because it was one of the first moves in that field, but also because it was definitely the touchstone which started Peirce's thoughts in the direction of vindicating the realism of science. One author has said that it was "Abbot's misfortune to be twenty years ahead of his due time," for "his keen and subtle critique of idealism, so offensive to his American contemporaries, would later have proved most acceptable."<sup>24</sup> In this chapter the main trends of the critique will be made clear, and in the next it will be shown that at least one American contemporary was not offended by the realistic position of Abbot's Introduction.

After briefly stating the purpose of his book, which is that "for a quarter of a century it has been my growing conviction that the solution of all the problems can only be accomplished by the principle of the Objectivity of Relations,"<sup>25</sup> Abbot launches immediately into a polemic against the Copernican

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<sup>24</sup> Francis Albert Christie, "Francis Ellingwood Abbot," Dictionary of American Biography, New York, 1943, I, 12.

<sup>25</sup> Scientific Theism, ix.

revolution of Kant which he claims is nothing more than the culmination of the revolution begun by the nominalists centuries before, starting with Roscellinus and Ockham. Since genera and species are classifications of things based on their supposed resemblances and differences, nominalism's denial of all objective validity to genera and species is the denial of all objective reality to the supposed resemblances and differences of things themselves; the denial of all knowledge of the relations of objects is the denial of all knowledge of the objects related; and this denial is tantamount to the assertion that things-in-themselves are utterly unknown. Kant's only contribution to this general scheme of nominalism was that he expanded the unknowability of the thing-in-itself into a self-consistent philosophical system. Subsequent to Kant's masterly development of nominalism into a great philosophical edifice, all modern philosophy, by tacit agreement, rests upon the nominalistic theory of universals.<sup>26</sup>

In the train of the Roscellino-Kantian revolution the natural result should have been the contraction of human knowledge to mere self-consciousness. Fortunately, however, there has always been a "common-sense" school in philosophy and in the other fields of life which refused to follow nominalistic principles out to their logical conclusions. These

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26 Ibid., 3-6.

schools have kept alive the realistic side of that absolute and insoluble contradiction between the one teaching that cognition conforms to things and the other that things conform to cognition.<sup>27</sup>

So deep, in fact, is this contradiction rooted that the battle between nominalism and realism is not over yet. But, Abbot goes on to say, just as the realism of scholasticism perished before nominalism, so will nominalism in its turn perish before the new realism of science, the scientific realism or relationism to be explained in these pages. And why does the key to realism lie in science? Because science never gave in to nominalism throughout the centuries. Abbot pointedly remarks:

It would be superfluous to cite further passages in order to illustrate the thoroughly objective spirit, method, and results of modern science, as contrasted with those of modern philosophy. All scientific investigations are founded on a theory diametrically opposed to that of Kant; namely, that things can be known, though incompletely known, as they are in themselves, and that cognition must conform itself to them, not they to it. . . . Science has achieved all its marvellous triumphs by practically denying the fundamental principle laid down by Kant, and by practically proceeding upon its exact opposite; and it is a scandal to philosophy that she has not yet legitimated this practical procedure, overwhelmingly justified as it is by its incontrovertible results. The time has come for philosophy to reverse the Roscellino-Kantian revolution, and give to science a theory of knowledge which shall render the scientific method, not practically successful (for that

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27 Ibid., 9-11.

it already is), but theoretically impregnable.<sup>28</sup>

Abbot next shows how Socrates, with his objective world, put realism into the fore for a millenium and a half, influencing both Plato and Aristotle. However, the "terrible intolerance with which the Church," which had taken its stand in philosophy upon Plato and Aristotle, "stamped out all dissent from this fixed standard of belief, inevitably tended to excite a reaction against it, in proportion to the mental activity of the age."<sup>29</sup> There should be, then, Abbot continues, no cause to wonder at the fact that the cause of nominalism came to be identified with the cause of intellectual and religious freedom, and the triumph of the one with the triumph of the other.

Porphyry's Introduction to the Categories of Aristotle is now pointed to as the occasion of the great dispute between nominalism and realism, and Abbot proceeds to give six theories which at various times were introduced to solve the problem. His analysis is both enlightening in that it presents the various doctrines in very brief—although not always correct—form, and helpful in that he rapidly sets the historical stage of the whole era.

Extreme realism (universalia ante rem) taught that

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28 Ibid., 14.

29 Ibid., 21.

universals were substances or things, existing independently of and separable from particulars or individuals. This theory was propounded by Plato and Scotus Erigena. Moderate realism (universalia in re) also taught that universals were substances, but only as dependent upon and inseparable from individuals, in which they inhered; that is, each universal inhered in each of the particulars ranged under it. This, Abbot states, was the theory of Aristotle.

Extreme nominalism (universalia post rem) taught that universals had no substantive or objective existence at all, but were merely empty names or words (nomina, voces, flatus vocis). This was the doctrine of Roscellinus. Moderate nominalism, or conceptualism, (universalia post rem) taught that universals had no substantive existence at all, but yet are more than mere names signifying nothing; and that they exist really, though only subjectively, as concepts in the mind, of which names are the vocal symbols. Abelard was probably the originator of this system, and Ockham its chief representative.

Albertus Magnus, St. Thomas, Duns Scotus and the scholastics in general are put into a class by themselves, which fused all these views into one and taught that universals exist in a three-fold manner, ante rem, in re, and post rem.<sup>30</sup>

None of these views satisfied Abbot. He therefore

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30 Ibid., 23-25.

proposed a sixth which would solve the question of realism and nominalism decisively. His theory of relationism, or scientific realism, (of which universalia inter res may be adopted as an apt formula) teaches that universals, or genera and species, are, first, objective relations of resemblance among objectively existing things; secondly, subjective concepts of these relations determined in the mind by the relations themselves; and, thirdly, names representative both of the relations and the concepts, and applicable alike to both. This doctrine, "although empirically employed with dazzling success in the investigation of Nature, does not appear to have been ever theoretically generalized or stated."<sup>31</sup>

What is the foundation of relationism? The doctrine in general rests for its justification upon the broader principle of the objectivity of relations. In particular, the propositions on which relationism depends are these: 1) Relations are absolutely inseparable from their terms. 2) The relations of things are absolutely inseparable from the things themselves. 3) The relations of things must exist where the things themselves are, whether objectively in the world or subjectively in the mind. 4) There is no logical alternative between affirming the objectivity of relations in and with that of things, and denying the objectivity of things in and with that

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31 Ibid., 25-26.

of relations.<sup>32</sup>

The tremendous step forward made by this theory over scholastic realism is that it avoids the great error of the schoolmen, the hypostatization of universals as substances, entities, or things; relationism teaches that genera and species exist objectively, but only as relations, and that things and relations constitute two great, distinct orders of objective reality, inseparable in existence, yet distinguishable in thought. The philosophic value, lastly, of this new doctrine can hardly be overestimated. It saves what is good in each of the other proposed solutions to the controversy over universals, and rejects what is bad. It vindicates extreme realism for upholding the objectivity of universals, but shows that it was wrong in classing them as independent and separable substances. It justifies moderate realism for maintaining the objectivity of universals, but chastises it for making them inherent in individuals as individuals, rather than in groups of individuals as groups, for relations do not inhere in either of the related terms taken singly, but inhere in all the terms taken collectively. Relationism praises extreme nominalism for its denial of universals as substances or things and for its affirmation of the existence of universals as names, although it was wrong in asserting that universals did not exist objectively as relations and subjectively

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32 Ibid., 26-27.



as concepts. Moderate nominalism, although admitting universals subjectively as concepts, still retained the error of denying their objectivity as relations.

If relationism is the great panacea, how has it been allowed to remain hidden all these years? The presupposition of this question must be distinguished. As a doctrine, relationism has been obscured by nominalism which gradually won the ascendancy among philosophers after the downfall of scholastic realism. As an unformulated and empirical principle, however, relationism did exist, and became the actual practice of scientific observers, experimenters, and investigators of nature, although they may have been nominalists in name.<sup>33</sup> But why did the philosophers not discover this theory at some point in their speculations through these centuries, especially if it is so evident a solution to the problem of universals? Undoubtedly this would have been the case, had philosophy continued to concentrate its attention on the problem of universals. But once she had accepted nominalism, which said that universals do not exist, she was confronted with a new problem. For the scholastics, the source of knowledge was placed in the universals. With no universals, how was the origin of cognition to be explained? Nominalism turned its full powers to the solution of this question, and allowed the other problem to slip from its

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33 Ibid., 29.

mind.

Even here science had the answer. While philosophers were dividing into two camps on the origin of knowledge, while Descartes and the a priori school thought cognition began in the mind, and Locke and the a posteriori faction voted for the senses, while all this useless bickering was going on among the philosophers, science boldly adopted the principle of objective verification to uphold the origin of knowledge, a principle depending absolutely for its validity upon relationism. Ever since then "scientific men have quietly assumed the objectivity of relations and steadily pursued the path of discovery in total disregard of the disputes of metaphysicians."<sup>34</sup>

Science, therefore, in deed rather than in word, is challenging the very foundation of nominalistic philosophy. She denies by the erection of a vast and towering edifice of verified objective knowledge that genera and species are devoid of objective reality, or that general terms are without their objective correlates. Her very existence is the abundant vindication of relationism as the stable and solid foundation of real knowledge of an objective universe. In fact, as the case now stands,

philosophy has two great schools, equally founded on a reasoned subjectivism which denies the possibility of knowing, in any degree, an objectively existent cosmos as it really is; while science rests immovably on the fact that she actually knows such a cos-

mos, and proves by verification the reality of that knowledge which philosophy loudly and emphatically denies.<sup>35</sup>

What must philosophy do to keep up with the changing times? She must shake off the blighting influence of scholasticism, for she has never modernized herself sufficiently to get rid of nominalism, one of the legitimate offspring of the Middle Ages. To do this she will have to "sit modestly at the feet of science"<sup>36</sup> and imbue herself thoroughly with the spirit of the scientific method. Only then will she be able to solve the problems she has been struggling with so long. Aristotle, according to Abbot, had seen the solution a long time ago, if interpreted correctly:

Translating the Moderate Realism of Aristotle into the more accurate language of Relationism, and not forgetting to correct its capital error of making the universal inhere in each individual as an individual (in re) rather than in all the individuals as a group (inter res), the meaning of his doctrine is that science is concerned with the general relations of things rather than with the things themselves—with general laws rather than with the peculiarities or accidents of individual objects.<sup>37</sup>

Thus things would become subordinated to the general laws which govern them, a direction which plainly is opposite to that taken by Scotus.

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35 Ibid., 33.

36 Ibid., 41.

37 Ibid., 41-42.

In summary of Abbot's system a shorter statement can hardly be found than that he himself proposes:

Objectivism in science takes its stand, consciously or unconsciously, on Relationism. Its fundamental principle is the law of Objective Verification—that cognition must conform itself to things, not things to cognition. The necessary corollary of this law is the inseparability of noumena and phenomena, phenomena being the 'appearances' of noumena, and noumena being that which 'appears' and is partially understood in phenomena; and they have their inseparable existence, not only in the mind, but also in the cosmos which the mind cognizes. The only utility in retaining the distinction at all is to mark the distinction between complete and incomplete knowledge—noumena being taken to denote things-in-themselves as they exist in all the complexity of their objective attributes and relations, and phenomena being taken to denote these same things-in-themselves so far only as they are known in their objective attributes and relations. The final outcome of scientific objectivism is a constantly growing knowledge of the real cosmos as it is, in which the human mind has its proper place and activity in entire harmony with cosmical laws.<sup>38</sup>

Having proposed the theories of the two men by whom Peirce was most influenced in his realism, it is now the opportune moment to examine Peirce's use of these sources, and to see how elements of Scotus and Abbot found their way into Peirce's philosophy.

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38 Ibid., 53.

## CHAPTER IV

### PEIRCE'S USE OF SOURCES

The works of Duns Scotus have strongly influenced me. If his logic and metaphysics, not slavishly worshipped, but torn away from its medievalism, be adapted to modern culture, under continual reminders of nominalistic criticisms, I am convinced that it will go far toward supplying the philosophy which is best to harmonize with physical science.<sup>1</sup>

This is only one statement of Peirce's which attests his inclination to accept the teaching of Duns Scotus as a basis for his own realism. If this were the only reference to Scotus, Peirce's allegiance to him might be questioned. But the name of Scotus appears so frequently in the writings of Peirce that it is plain that he breathed the very atmosphere of Scotism in his philosophy. Peirce, however, must not be construed as adopting Scotus in the context of the Middle Ages, for, although he had "been an attentive and meditative student"<sup>2</sup> of the works of Duns, he "does not mean that he is going back to the general views of 600 years back; he merely means that the point of metaphysics upon which Scotus chiefly insisted and which has since passed out of mind,

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1 CP, 1.6.

2 CP, 6.328.

is a very important point."<sup>3</sup> His praise of the Subtle Doctor is, nevertheless, almost without bounds, for Peirce considers him as the one representative of scholasticism in whom he was personally interested. In Peirce's estimation, "the metaphysics of Aquinas, a modified Aristotelianism, had been immensely elaborated and deeply transformed by the vast logical genius of the British Duns Scotus,"<sup>4</sup> who was "one of the greatest metaphysicians of all time."<sup>5</sup> In 1893 Peirce could write: "Yet be it known that never, during the thirty years in which I have been writing on philosophical questions, have I failed in my allegiance to realistic opinions and to certain Scotistic ideas."<sup>6</sup> Whether this strict adherence to Scotistic teaching continued through the rest of his life is an interesting point that will be commented on presently.

In tracing the elements of Scotistic realism which were the occasion of similar doctrines in Peirce, there is no way in which it is possible to be absolutely certain that Peirce derived any specific theory from his study of one particular philosopher. All that can be done is to indicate certain logical parallels, and draw the inference that Peirce had conceived,

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3 CP, 4.50.

4 CP, 2.166.

5 CP, 4.28.

6 CP, 6.605.

or at least worked out, the idea under the influence of his reading in the history of philosophy.

What are the features of Scotiam, then, that attracted Peirce? It must be remembered that Scotus was not the only scholastic with whom Peirce was acquainted, for he was familiar with St. Thomas and others of the Middle Ages, but never went out of his way to honor them with the meed of praise. Therefore, elements must be singled out which are characteristically Scotistic, and which the other systems as a general rule are lacking.

Scotus' most distinctive realistic teaching centers around the common nature and the haecceity, as has been shown in the last chapter. Peirce saw in these two ideas many things which appealed to him, and some of the conclusions he reached reflected this knowledge. First of all it will profit to look at Peirce's doctrine on universals, or rather, generals, for he rarely used the other term.<sup>7</sup> Then some features of haecceity which interested him can be delved into.

Peirce, from his study of science in theory and practice, had learned to reject nominalism in favor of realism. But he did not wish to make the capital mistake of going too

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7 Feibleman gives this reason: "Peirce preferred to call his universals generals in order to show that he did not mean them to be anything absolute or final, an advance over Kant as well as over Abbot." Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy, 50.

far in the other direction, and ending up with an extreme realism which would be only another form of nominalism. Therefore he wanted to assert that his generals were real, but yet not the "really real," to borrow the Platonic phrase. He found a means to incorporate these facts in his realism through Scotus' teaching on the common nature, which is the intelligible content of the universal, prescinding from either singular or universal existence. This common nature does not merely exist in particular things, as the Aristotelians say, nor is it subsistent in itself as Plato wished. Rather, it has its own subjective unity, being neither a pure intellectual fiction, nor existing objectively in the world of nature as an individual. This objective unity of the common nature, which nevertheless is less than numerical unity, makes it an integral part of the real world. Thus Peirce was able to affirm that his generals had some reality, and he still managed to avoid Platonic realism, a charge that Feibleman wished to lay at his doorstep as was seen above.

Thus far Peirce may seem to be in broad agreement with scholastic realism, at least as proposed by Duns Scotus. But there is this important difference in his way of considering the general which must be taken into account. For Scotus, as for all the scholastics, the thought required to apprehend the universal is that of the individual intellect, and this apprehension is the result of the necessary knowledge of being.



Peirce changes this picture considerably, for the thought which grasps the reality of the general is that of the community of minds employing the method of scientific inquiry throughout an unlimited period of time.<sup>8</sup> Therefore any one individual's apprehension of a general is not necessary, but probably only, and stands to be corrected by what succeeding minds will come to know of the same general.

It is when Peirce talks of elements derived from haecceity, though, that his dependence upon Scotus becomes quite marked. Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas, making the principle of individuation unknowable matter which gives the individual its numerical unity, left the somewhat anomalous situation of the individual being constituted through something which could not of itself be known. This view of Aristotle and the scholastics was predominant during the early Middle Ages, leaving the individual a somewhat vague entity in which the universal form was the thing that was accentuated. Peirce did not like to

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, CP, 5.311: "The real, then, is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you. Thus, the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of a definite increase of knowledge."

See also CP, 2.654n, where he says: "I do not here admit an absolutely unknowable. Evidence could show us what would probably be the case after any given lapse of time; and though a subsequent time might be assigned which that evidence might not cover, yet further evidence would cover it."

have the reality of the individual thus subordinated to the reality of the universal, and in Scotus he found a way in which the realism of actual particulars could be made equal to that of generals without losing at the same time the generality of his realism. Thus Scotus' teaching according to which the individual is constituted by a positive entity in its individuality allowed Peirce to restore the emphasis on the reality of the individual without giving up the reality of generals.

But haecceity has far more implications in Peirce's philosophy than the one already described. A passage combining the necessity of something to make the general idea particularized in each subject, together with a rejection of an overzealous adoption of extreme realism, is the following:

An indexical word, such as a proper noun or demonstrative or selective pronoun, has force to draw the attention of the listener to some hecceity common to the experience of speaker and listener. By a hecceity, I mean, some element of existence which, not merely by the likeness between its different apparitions, but by an inward force of identity, manifesting itself in the continuity of its apparition throughout time and in space, is distinct from everything else, and is thus fit (as it can in no other way be) to receive a proper name or to be indicated as this or that. Contrast this with the signification of the verb, which is sometimes in my thought, sometimes in yours, and which has no other identity than the agreement between its several manifestations. That is what we call an abstraction or idea. The nominalists say it is a mere name. Strike out the 'mere' and this opinion is approximately true. The realists say it is real. Substitute for 'is,' may be, that is, is provided experience and reason shall, as their final upshot, uphold the truth of the particular predicate, and the natural existence of the law it expresses, and

this is likewise true. It is certainly a great mistake to look upon an idea, merely because it has not the mode of existence of a haecceity, as a lifeless thing.<sup>9</sup>

In the category of Secondness are found the greatest resemblances to haecceity, for Secondness is fact, as has been shown, and fact is something "perfectly individual. It happens here and now."<sup>10</sup>

Again Peirce declares:

In truth, any fact is in one sense ultimate—that is to say, in its isolated aggressive stubbornness and individual reality. What Scotus calls the haecceities of things, the hereness and nowness of them, are indeed ultimate. Why this which is here is such as it is; how, for instance, if it happens to be a grain of sand, it came to be so small and so hard, we can ask; we can also ask how it got carried here; but the explanation in this case merely carries us back to the fact that it was once in some other place, where similar things might naturally be expected to be. Why IT, independently of its general characters, comes to have any definite place in the world, is not a question to be asked; it is simply an ultimate fact.<sup>11</sup>

Foundations for Peirce's doctrine of chance are also found in this teaching of Scotus. Every explanation, for instance, of the moon's path, a phenomenon that may seem to rest indubitably upon universal, inflexible principles, must take particular existences and events into consideration before the

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9 CP, 3.460.

10 CP, 1.419.

11 CP, 1.405.

general law can be formulated. Such original or underived individuality and diversity is precisely what Peirce means by chance;<sup>12</sup> and from this point of view chance, springing from the individuality of each particular event, is prior to law, as was explained at the end of chapter two.

In the phases of Peirce's realism just outlined it is possible to trace definite points of community with Scotistic metaphysics. But an underlying current of disagreement is also present, which would indicate either that Peirce did not understand Scotus fully, or that he broke away from him under some other influence. This latter hypothesis seems to be the better of the two, especially when account is taken of the fact that Peirce is less magnanimous in his praise of Scotus during the years following 1900. In 1903 he writes that he calls himself "an Aristotelian of the scholastic wing, approaching Scotism, but going much further in the direction of scholastic realism,"<sup>13</sup> as though he disapproved of Duns for not teaching the fullness of scholastic realism. The same year he states: "Nor in other respects must it be supposed that I assent to everything either in Scotus or in Kant. We all commit our blunders."<sup>14</sup> By 1905 his criticism is more pointed, for he had come to suspect Scotus

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12 CP, 6.612.

13 CP, 5.77n.

14 CP, 6.95.

of incurring the one charge that always made Peirce see red:  
 "I ultimately came to approve of the opinions of Duns, although  
 I think he inclines too much towards nominalism."<sup>15</sup> In 1909 he  
 openly differs from Scotus in interpreting haecceity to conform  
 with his pragmatism, but he tries to say that his meaning is  
 what Scotus was really driving at:

It [the correlate of a relation] is existent, in that  
 its being does not consist in any qualities, but in  
 its effects—in its actually acting and being acted  
 on, so long as this action and suffering endures.  
 Those who experience its effects perceive and know  
 it in that action; and just that constitutes its very  
 being. It is not in perceiving its qualities that  
 they know it, but in hefting its insistency then and  
 there, which Duns called its haecceitas—or, if he  
 didn't, it was this he was groping after.<sup>16</sup>

Peirce evidently was attempting to mold Scotism to fit  
 the realistic philosophy which he thought was necessary to uphold  
 the realism of science. His reason for borrowing from both  
 Scotus and Abbot is well expressed by Feibleman: "This demand  
 [for a philosophy of science] Peirce found adequately supplied  
 by the realistic philosophy of Duns Scotus. From Abbot's work  
 Peirce had learned that science was realistic rather than nomi-  
 nalistic; but, as Peirce himself said, it was Duns Scotus who  
 had showed him exactly what kind of realism was conformable

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15 CP, 1.560.

16 CP, 6.318.

17 Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy, 57.

with science."<sup>17</sup> Abbot's contribution to the formation of Peirce's realism, then, was the clear formulation of the realistic principles on which science rested,<sup>18</sup> and its need for a realistic philosophy to give formal support to the investigations it had been carrying on independently of philosophy. This much Peirce took from Abbot, but the elaboration was his own, for he was the first modern philosophical advocate of the realistic character of science possessing sufficient technical knowledge to be able to defend the position.<sup>19</sup>

Peirce's theory of Thirdness, or law, has definite elements of Abbot's scientific realism in it. For science starts with inductions to erect hypotheses, which are then tested by observations, and, if found valid, used as a basis for deductions. Thus the existence of universal principles or laws is required; laws, moreover, which are independent of any person or collection of persons having knowledge of them—a capital point in Peirce's theory. These laws, to go a step further, are not absolute, are not mere summaries of known facts, but also are finders of new ones. Thus science has come to be for

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18 CP, 4.1: "Dr. Abbot in his Scientific Theism has so clearly and with such admirable simplicity shown that modern science is realistic that it is perhaps injudicious for me to attempt to add anything upon the subject."

19 Feibleman, Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy,

Peirce not only a study of facts in and for their own sake, but also a search for the laws demanded by the facts and inclusive of them.<sup>20</sup> Herein can be seen a reason for the shift from strict scholasticism to a modified form of it which includes the relationism outlined by Abbot. For if facts are not to be the prime interest, then Peirce would not be concerned so much about a static universal which existed in each particular thing as he would be in connecting these things together to arrive at a general law which would govern the relations of them to one another, or, in other words, in arriving at the universal relations between things. Peirce attributes the advances made in modern sciences over those made in ancient precisely to the fact that an increased knowledge of the relations of things has been acquired:

The words 'cause' and 'effect' still linger, but the old conceptions have been dropped from mechanical philosophy; for the fact now known is that in certain relative positions bodies undergo certain accelerations. Now an acceleration, instead of being like a velocity a relation between two successive positions, is a relation between three; so that the new doctrine has consisted in the suitable introduction of the con-

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20 CP, 1.7: "Thus, in brief, my philosophy may be described as the attempt of a physicist to make such conjectures as to the constitution of the universe as the methods of science may permit, with the aid of all that has been done by previous philosophers. I shall support my propositions by such arguments as I can. Demonstrative proof is not to be thought of. The demonstrations of the metaphysicians are all moonshine. The best that can be done is to supply a hypothesis, not devoid of all likelihood, in the general line of growth of scientific ideas, and capable of being verified or refuted by future observers."

ception of threeness. On this idea, the whole of modern physics is built. The superiority of modern geometry, too, has certainly been due to nothing so much as the bridging of the innumerable distinct cases with which ancient science was encumbered; and we may go so far as to say that all the great steps in the method of science in every department have consisted in bringing into relation cases previously discrete.<sup>21</sup>

In brief form, then, various phases of Peirce's realism which seem to have been occasioned by elements drawn from Scotus and Abbot have been enumerated. The idea of the general as being something real in the world, without having the ultimate reality which belongs only to individuals is well taken care of by Scotus' common nature and haecceity. This last factor, moreover, is carried out in Peirce's continual insistence on the absolute imperativeness of the category of Secondness, and in his principle of chance which demands that the individual events be all considered before the universal law is formulated.<sup>22</sup> From Abbot Peirce learned that science depends upon these general relations, for the conception of distinct things not standing in relation to one another is senseless, and would lead ultimately to solipsism. But Peirce advances on these ideas, and states that the cognition of universals cannot be necessary, since they are continually being further determined and deve-

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21 CP, 1.359.

22 Which even then remains only a general law admitting of development, and is not strictly universal.



loped. But this is a wrinkle Peirce himself worked out, not to be attributed to either Scotus or Abbot, and it will be left for the last chapter in which a judgment will be passed on the realism of Peirce, both in relation to these sources, and in itself.

## CHAPTER V

### EVALUATION OF PEIRCE'S SCHOLASTIC REALISM

Now that Peirce's doctrine on realism has been explained with reference to its sources in Scotus and Abbot, it is time to pass judgment and to evaluate his system of realism in the light of scholastic principles, to which he always claimed faithful adherence. This task is not an easy one, for Peirce is not lacking in obscurity, even on points about which he speaks frequently.

Peirce can hardly be said to have begun a complete revolution by his teaching on realism. No man has ever been independent of his predecessors in evolving a doctrine, and Peirce, powerful and original thinker though he was, resembled other great men in that he belongs to a definite tradition. Reid and Hamilton had declared for realism in Great Britain the century before, and Peirce was well aware of their work. Besides, as has been seen, he relied on the realistic doctrine of the scholastics to a very high degree. Therefore he did not excogitate his realism unaided by the philosophy of the past. His glory, rather, lies in this, that he argued strongly for a realistic philosophy at a time when America was feeling

very much the influence of the nineteenth century idealistic and subjectivistic philosophies of Hegel, personalism, evolutionism, and absolute idealism. To Peirce, and to Abbot, goes the honor of seeing that science would contradict itself once it had denied the objectivity of relations. He saw that the antiquation of Aristotle's physics was no reason for throwing away the fine bedrock of reality, logic, and metaphysics which are actually the bases for any physics whatever. And seeing that, he strove his utmost to bring these realistic principles back into philosophical respectability after four centuries of disrepute. That he did not succeed in his day was due to unfortunate circumstances of obscurity and lack of influence beyond his control; that his realistic principles and logic are having influence today upon philosophers of all schools is supreme evidence of their intrinsic worth, and a testimony that Peirce was a generation ahead of his time in his philosophical tendencies.

Peirce, therefore, advocated a realistic philosophy far ahead of his contemporaries; the question that this thesis wishes to answer, however, is precisely what kind of realism Peirce had. It has been shown in chapter two that he did have a true realism, and not merely a phenomenal idealism, which confuses the real things with the mental appearances of them when they are known. But Peirce claimed more than a mere passing grade in the subject of realism; he claimed to have gone back to

the scholastics, to Duns Scotus in particular, and to have evolved a scholastic realism that would fit modern science. Is this last claim of his justified, and if not, why not? This, as is evident, is the nub of this thesis, and to avoid the question would be to leave the work undone.

That Peirce did have many affinities to scholasticism as proposed by Scotus is plain from the last chapter and need not be proved again. But, as hinted at previously, there are also profound differences. There are three principal counts on which Peirce's interpretation of the general differs from the scholastics' universal, and on each of these it will be seen that the differences are fundamental and irreconcilable.

The scholastics, and Scotus was no exception in this, held that the basis for the universal was to be found in the substantial form or essence of the thing, thus making the universal depend on something intrinsic to the being, indeed on the thing most intrinsic to it, its quiddity. This point is fundamental to scholasticism also, for a man is not called a man because he acts in a certain way, but merits the predicate because he has a certain nature, whether he places any acts or not. The second point of the scholastic theory from which Peirce differs is that the operations flow from a being because a being is determined by its form to act in such and such a way, and therefore the regularity, according to the scholastics, must be sought in the form, and not merely in the effects or habit of operation

as such. Lastly, the schoolmen held that the universal was apprehended by the individual intellect and gave a necessary knowledge of being.

Measuring Peirce's general against these criteria, several differences emerge immediately. First of all, the fundamentum in re for his general is not the quiddity of a thing, but rather the way the thing operates,<sup>1</sup> or its habit of action, something which is partially determined, but which will still admit of further determination as it develops. Peirce had no other choice, for with his principle of chance he could hardly settle upon something fixed as the foundation for his general and at the same time retain an explanation for the change and development in things. With the operation of a thing for the basis for the general, however, he could allow for the chance happening which would be the beginning of a new habit, and thus of a new general as the thing, according to its new habit, was now related to other things in a new way.

Secondly, Peirce, instead of seeking a natura which would be the principle of operations under investigation, was rather inclined to place the total reality of the general in the operation itself and its relation to other things. But as

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1 See CP, 1.27n: "The predicate, hardness, is not invented by men, as the word is, but is really and truly in the hard things and is one in them all, as a description of habit, disposition, or behavior." Note especially the last phrase.

long as Peirce refused to look into the principle of the operation, scholastics would say that he did not have an adequate explanation for the phenomena, and therefore did not have sufficient foundation for his system. As was shown in chapter two, there is a dispute whether Peirce held that there is a substance underlying accidents or not. It may be that he disregarded or overlooked the question of substance, satisfied with the affirmation that the accidents were real; but this could hardly afford an ultimate explanation of the accidents, and it is this that philosophy should give.

As for the last factor, Peirce denied that the universal is apprehended by the individual intellect and resulted in necessary knowledge, but maintained instead that the general is grasped by the community of minds employing the method of scientific inquiry throughout an unlimited period of time. The scholastics' necessary knowledge of the unchanging universal has yielded the field to mere probable knowledge of a general which is continually becoming more and more perfect.

Having shown that the interpretation given by Peirce on these three questions is other than that of the scholastics, the question might arise whether these elements are essential to Peirce's system, or are accidental and could be abandoned without harming his realism as such. A short review of some of the principles on which Peirce based his philosophy might serve as the best answer to this question. Influenced as he

was by evolution, especially Lamarckian evolution which is based on the evolving of habits through chance occurrences, Peirce placed much weight on the principles of continuity and chance. The one holds for a continual progress in nature from the lowest up to the highest, from matter to mind. The principle of chance (for through chance occurrences new habits arise) gives a sufficient reason for the regularity found in nature; for once a thing has happened in one way rather than in another, a habit is set up according to which actions in the future are likely to take place.

From this brief summary of some of the underlying presuppositions that Peirce took for granted, it is easy to see that the theory of the general as presented above is essential to his system, for he cannot possibly have a fixed foundation for his general as long as he holds a principle of chance demanding the opportunity for some possible future variation. The same criticism would hold against his neglect to evolve a doctrine on substance, for an evolutionistic philosophy, while not necessarily denying fixed natures of things, finds the path much smoother if this question can be ignored. As for only probable knowledge of the general in Peirce's theory, this necessarily follows from the fact that at any particular moment the general is not yet fully evolved, and therefore could not result in a necessary knowledge of being for the individual intellect. Only at some future time, when the evolution will have been com-

pleted, can the community of minds hope to know generals.

But, if Peirce's universal is not one common nature which can be predicated of many individuals singly and univocally, does he yet retain a realism? He argues vehemently that he does, and his argument seems to have genuine worth. He takes the operation of a natural law, the law of gravitation, to exemplify his theory. From overwhelming experience in the past that unsupported stones fall freely, man necessarily supposes—even more, he knows—that this stone, if released, will fall. Now this knowledge can come from two hypotheses. Either the uniformity with which those stones have fallen in the past has been due to mere chance, and affords no ground whatever for thinking that this stone will fall, or the uniformity with which the stones have fallen has been due to some active principle which is a general, in which case it would be a strange coincidence that it should cease to act at the moment my prediction was based on it.<sup>2</sup> Peirce continues:

Of course, every sane man will adopt the latter hypothesis. If he could doubt it in the case of the stone—which he can't—and I may as well drop the stone once for all—I told you so!—if anybody doubts this still, a thousand other such inductive predictions are getting verified every day, and he will have to suppose every one of them to be merely fortuitous in order reasonably to escape the conclusion that general principles are really operative in nature. That is the doctrine of scholastic realism.<sup>3</sup>

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2 CP, 5.100.

3 CP, 5.101.



Therefore, although the general is not the necessarily known form which the scholastics conceived, it nevertheless is rooted in reality and has real meaning. It is a general law or mode of acting to which things conform. It is, to put it in Abbot's words, an objective relation which holds good between things and on which our knowledge of them is based.

Here, then, is a wide and fundamental divergence from the scholasticism of Scotus. Was Peirce aware of this difference? It seems that he was, for as has been noted in the last chapter, after he explained haecceity to conform with his pragmatic norm, he states that this is what Scotus meant, if he did not actually mean it. An even more convincing proof that Peirce saw differences between his doctrine and Scotism is the following passage, which also shows that Peirce recognized Abbot as the source from which the divergence stemmed:

But what distinguishes it [pragmatism] from other species is, first, its retention of a purified philosophy; secondly, its full acceptance of the main body of our instinctive beliefs; and thirdly, its strenuous insistence upon the truth of scholastic realism (or a close approximation to that, well-stated by the late Dr. Francis Ellingwood Abbot in the Introduction to his Scientific Theism.)<sup>4</sup>

Again Peirce says: "I am myself a scholastic realist of a somewhat extreme stripe."<sup>5</sup> With this evidence it is plain that

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4 CP, 5.423.

5 CP, 5.470. Italics not in the original.

Peirce had not fooled himself into thinking that his realism was exactly the same as Scotus'. Perhaps the reason why he continued to lay claim to a scholastic realism at all was that he conceived himself as "taking the point of metaphysics upon which Scotus chiefly insisted," without "going back to the general views of 600 years back."<sup>6</sup> By so doing, he would not be "slavishly worshipping" the logic and metaphysics of Duns Scotus, but would have "adapted it to modern culture."<sup>7</sup> Whatever the answer—whether Peirce thought that his modifications of Scotism still allowed him to remain within the pale of scholastic thought or not—it seems certain that he in fact proposed a system contrary to scholastic principles on universality and generality, for in denying the scholastic notion of substance and quiddity as the basis for his general, he irrevocably separated himself from true scholastic realism.

One last consideration yet remains for surveillance. Does Peirce's theory of universals, since not exactly identical with scholastic moderate realism, verge more towards extreme realism or towards nominalism? In other words, are Peirce's generals more real or less real than the scholastics' universals?

The universal nature for the scholastic is derived

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6 CP, 4.50.

7 CP, 1.6.

from the form, the act, of the being, and of itself denotes only perfection. It must, of course, be received into matter to exist and to be individuated,<sup>8</sup> but the matter gives only the individuality of the being, and in no way contributes to causing the being to have this or that form.

Peirce, working with an evolutionistic world which is continually progressing from the somewhat imperfect state at the beginning to its full actualization, had a different view. In the primitive chaotic state of the world the forms were all immersed in the amorphous mass of matter which constituted the origin of things. Then, as time went on, the forms began to evolve themselves from the matter through the principles of chance and continuity, reaching after higher and higher modes of perfection. At some period in the indefinitely far future, a point which the community of minds will know, but which no individual here and now can know, these forms will have fully evolved, and will be fully actualized. But until such time they are still in the process of formalization, so to speak, and as such are based not only on act but also have potentiality intrinsecally connected with them, a potentiality which will be fulfilled when the form is fully actualized.

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<sup>8</sup> At least according to the Thomistic doctrine. But even for Scotus the common nature is the form, or strictly in the line of act, to which haecceity comes as the last actuality before the individual is constituted in being. In neither system do the notes of the universal contain potentiality.

It would therefore seem that Peirce accords less reality to the universal than the scholastics, for inasmuch as he allows the universal to embrace potentiality, he places in it an element of unknowability. And as an idea can represent the real only inasmuch as it is knowable, the universal of the scholastics is better suited to portraying objective reality than the general of Peirce, since everything in the universal is knowable, while something in the general must necessarily remain unknowable.

These, then, must be the final judgments of Peirce's theory of realism. Although he does possess a true realism, and thus serves as a buffer against the nominalism and idealism of the many philosophers who preceded him from the time of Descartes, he certainly does not possess the scholastic realism to which he laid claim. The principal reason for the difference was the laboratory-trained mind of Peirce, who, although genuinely trying to establish a metaphysics, was prevented by his overfamiliarity with the methods of science from accomplishing this task. His scientific sense of arriving at an exact goal only at some date far in the future obfuscated for him the truth that the mind has here and now the intuitional power of understanding certain things clearly. His foundations in evolutionistic theory and in the principles of chance and continuity rendered his general incapable of being known by the individual intellect. The general, being bound up with an element of

potentiality, is therefore less real than the universal of the scholastics, although it still is real, for it represents general principles which are really operative in nature. In denying Peirce the title of scholastic realist one must not deny him his greatest achievement: that of having attained to some sort of realism in the midst of the subjectivistic philosophical surroundings in which he lived and worked.

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## APPENDIX I

## DATES OF WRITINGS IN THE COLLECTED PAPERS

The following table gives the year of publication (or of composition in the case of mss.) of all writings from the Collected Papers referred to or quoted in this thesis.

[illegible]

423	1905	16	1891	327	c.1909
430	1905	17	1891	328	c.1909
432	1905	32	1891	339	c.1909
470	c.1906	35-65	1892	340	c.1909
503	c.1905	95	1903	349	1902-03
525	c.1905	175	1906	361	1902
565	1902	182	1911	393	1902
		183	1911	453	1908
		184	1911	495	c.1906
Volume VI		192	1898	593	1893
		277	c.1893	605	1893
2	1898	300	1893	612	1893
15	1891	318	c.1909	613	1893

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by **Ralph John Bastian, S.J.** has been read and approved by three members of the Department of **Philosophy**.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

August 15, 1952  
Date

R. F. Harvanek, S.J.  
Signature of Adviser